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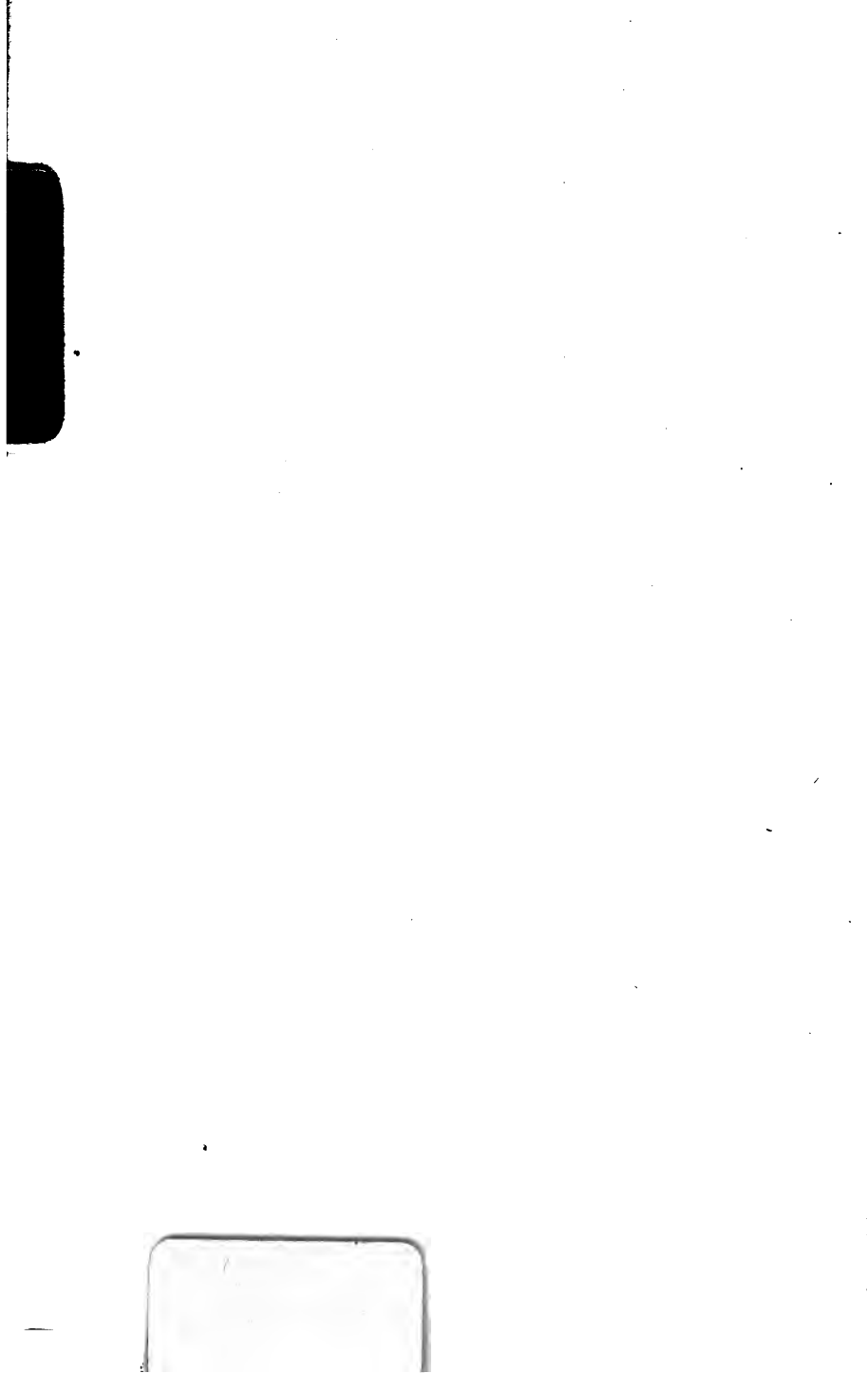
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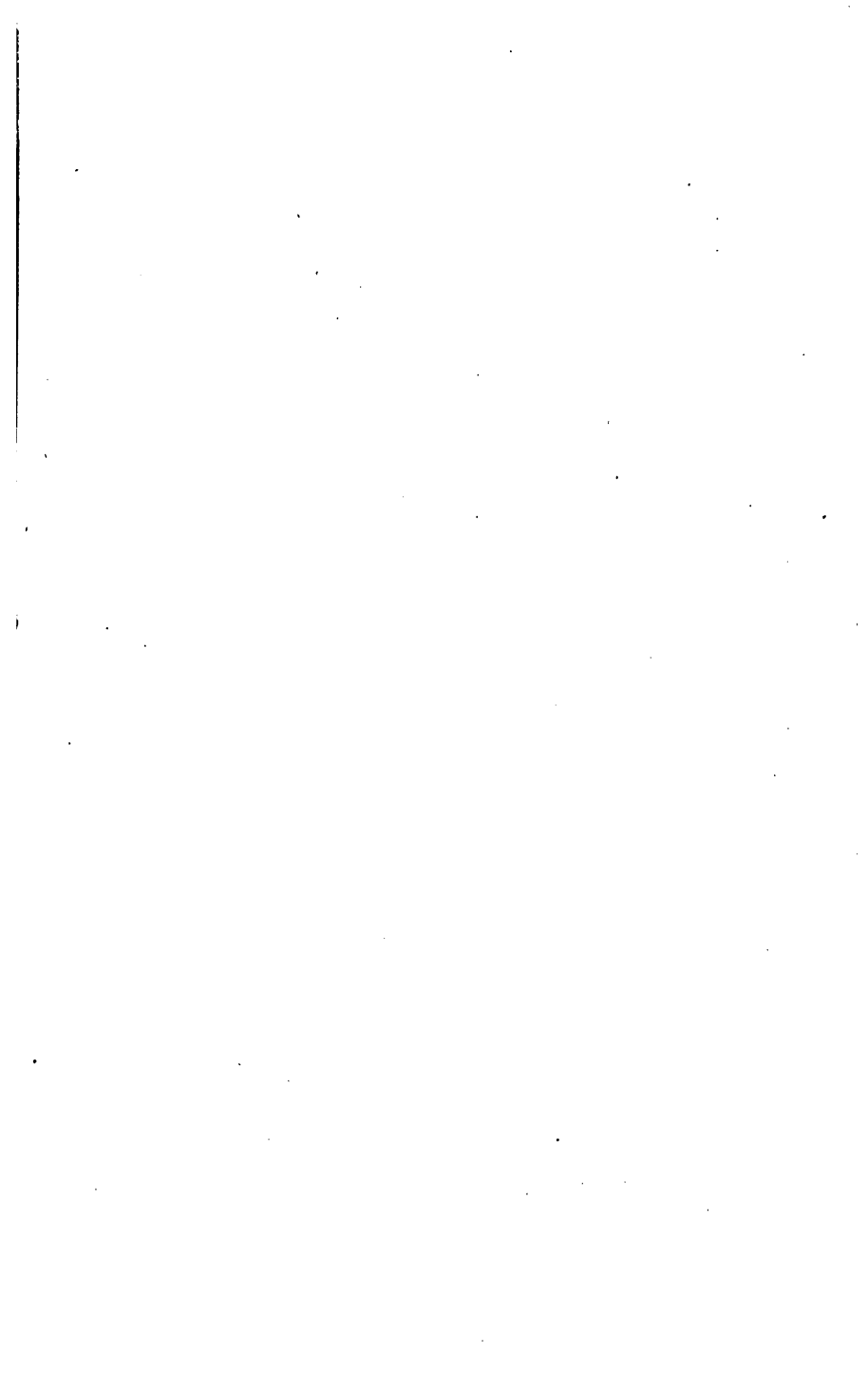
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17
Graham





Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant

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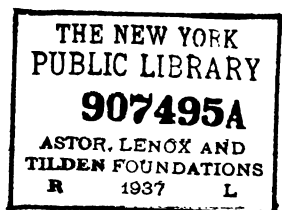
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY	
<i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	5
2. THE NECKLACE	
<i>Guy de Maupassant</i>	47
3. THE SIGNAL	
<i>Vsevolod Mikailovitch Garshin</i>	63
4. PUTOIS	
<i>Anatole France</i>	83
5. THE COURTING OF T'NOWHEAD'S BELL	
<i>James Matthew Barrie</i>	105
6. THE GRAY NUN	
<i>Nataly von Eschstruth</i>	137
7. SAC-AU-DOS	
<i>Joris Karl Huysmans</i>	161
8. THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF	
<i>A. T. Quiller-Couch</i>	209
9. THE STORY OF THE LITTLE MAMSELL	
<i>Charlotte Niese</i>	237
10. A BAL MASQUE	
<i>Alexandre Dumas</i>	253

CONTENTS

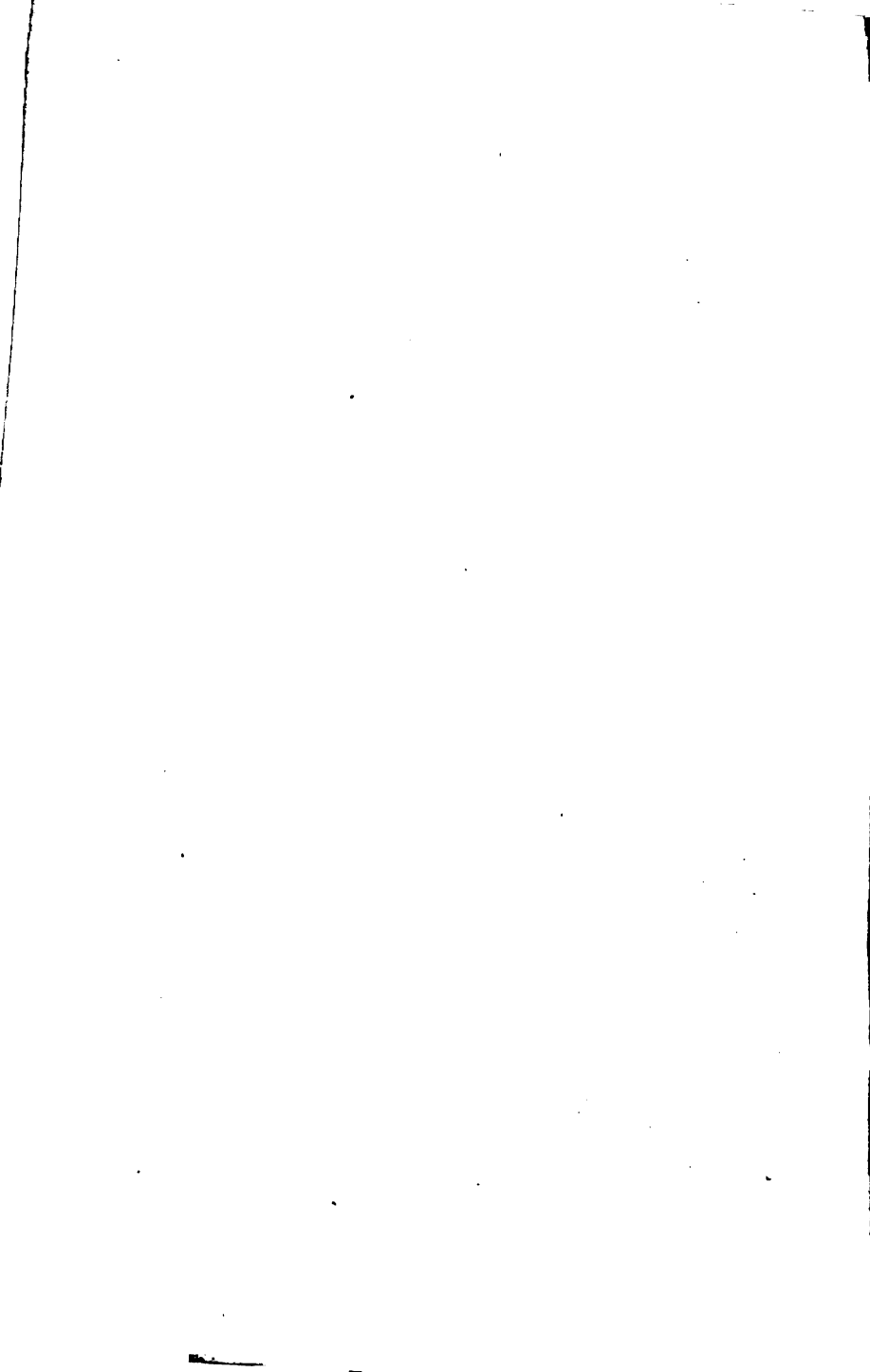
	PAGE
11. THE RED ROOM	
<i>H. G. Wells</i>	269
12. THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE	
<i>Emile Zola</i>	287
13. GOOD BLOOD	
<i>Ernst von Wildenbruch</i>	335

THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

1937

TRANSFER FROM C. S. AUG



THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

Wohlauf, my bully cavaliers,
We ride to church to-day,
The man that hasn't got a horse
Must steal one straight away.

Be reverent, men, remember
This is a Gotteshaus.
Du, Conrad, cut along der aisle
And schenk der whisky aus.
Han's Breitmann's Ride to Church.

ONCE upon a time, very far from England, there lived three men who loved each other so greatly that neither man nor woman could come between them. They were in no sense refined, nor to be admitted to the outer-door mats of decent folk, because they happened to be private soldiers in Her Majesty's Army; and private soldiers of our service have small time for self-culture. Their duty is to keep themselves and their accoutrements specklessly clean, to refrain from getting drunk more often than is necessary, to obey their superiors, and to pray for a war. All these things my friends accomplished; and of their own motion threw in some fighting-work for which the Army Regulations did not call. Their fate sent them to serve in India, which is not a golden country, though

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

poets have sung otherwise. There men die with great swiftness, and those who live suffer many and curious things. I do not think that my friends concerned themselves much with the social or political aspects of the East. They attended a not unimportant war on the northern frontier, another one on our western boundary, and a third in Upper Burma. Then their regiment sat still to recruit, and the boundless monotony of cantonment life was their portion. They were drilled morning and evening on the same dusty parade-ground. They wandered up and down the same stretch of dusty white road, attended the same church and the same grog-shop, and slept in the same lime-washed barn of a barrack for two long years. There was Mulvaney, the father in the craft, who had served with various regiments from Bermuda to Halifax, old in war, scarred, reckless, resourceful, and in his pious hours an unequalled soldier. To him turned for help and comfort six and a half feet of slow-moving, heavy-footed Yorkshiremen, born on the wolds, bred in the dales, and educated chiefly among the carriers' carts at the back of York railway station. His name was Learoyd, and his chief virtue an unmitigated patience which helped him to win fights. How Ortheris, a fox-terrier or a Cockney, ever came to be one of the trio, is a mystery which even to-day I cannot explain. "There was always three av us," Mulvaney used to say. "An' by the grace av God, so long as our service last,

KRISHNA MULVANEY

three av us they'll always be. 'Tis better so." They desired no companionship beyond their own, and it was evil for any man of the regiment who attempted dispute with them. Physical argument was out of the question as regarded Mulvaney and the Yorkshireman; and assault on Ortheris meant a combined attack from these twain—a business which no five men were anxious to have on their hands. Therefore they flourished, sharing their drinks, their tobacco, and their money; good luck and evil; battle and the chances of death, life and the chances of happiness from Calicut in southern, to Peshawur in northern India.

Through no merit of my own it was my good fortune to be in a measure admitted to their friendship—frankly by Mulvaney from the beginning, sullenly and with reluctance by Learoyd, and suspiciously by Ortheris, who held to it that no man not in the army could fraternize with a red-coat. "Like to like," said he. "I'm a bloomin' sodger—he's a bloomin' civilian. 'Taint natural—that's all.'

But that was not all. They thawed progressively, and in the thawing told me more of their lives and adventures than I am ever likely to write.

Omitting all else, this tale begins with the Lamentable Thirst that was at the beginning of First Causes. Never was such a thirst—Mulvaney told me so. They kicked against their com-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

pulsory virtue, but the attempt was only successful in the case of Ortheris. He, whose talents were many, went forth into the highways and stole a dog from a "civilian"—*videlicet*, some one, he knew not who, not in the Army. Now that civilian was but newly connected by marriage with the colonel of the regiment, and outcry was made from quarters least anticipated by Ortheris, and, in the end, he was forced, lest a worse thing should happen, to dispose at ridiculously unremunerative rates of as promising a small terrier as ever graced one end of a leading string. The purchase-money was barely sufficient for one small outbreak which led him to the guard-room. He escaped, however, with nothing worse than a severe reprimand, and a few hours of punishment drill. Not for nothing had he acquired the reputation of being "the best soldier of his inches" in the regiment. Mulvaney had taught personal cleanliness and efficiency as the first articles of his companion's creed. "A dhirty man," he was used to say, in the speech of his kind, "goes to Clink for a weakness in the knees, an' is coort-martialled for a pair av socks miss-in'; but a clane man, such as is an ornament to his service—a man whose buttons are gold, whose coat is wax upon him, an' whose 'coutrements are widout a speck—*that* man may, spakin' in reason, do fwhat he likes an' dhrink from day to divil. That's the pride av bein' dacint."

We sat together, upon a day, in the shade of

KRISHNA MULVANEY

a ravine far from the barracks, where a water-course used to run in rainy weather. Behind us was the scrub jungle, in which jackals, peacocks, the gray wolves of the Northwestern Provinces, and occasionally a tiger estrayed from Central India, were supposed to dwell. In front lay the cantonment, glaring white under a glaring sun; and on either side ran the road that led to Delhi.

It was the scrub that suggested to my mind the wisdom of Mulvaney taking a day's leave and going upon a shooting-tour. The peacock is a holy bird throughout India, and he who slays one is in danger of being mobbed by the nearest villagers; but on the last occasion that Mulvaney had gone forth, he had contrived, without in the least offending local religious susceptibilities, to return with six beautiful peacock skins which he sold to profit. It seemed just possible then—

"But f'what manner av use is ut to me goin' out widout a dhrink? The ground's powdher-dhry underfoot, an' ut gets unto the throat fit to kill," wailed Mulvaney, looking at me reproachfully. "An' a peacock is not a bird you can catch the tail av onless ye run. Can a man run on wather—an' jungle-wather too?"

Ortheris had considered the question in all its bearings. He spoke, chewing his pipe-stem meditatively the while:

"Go forth, return in glory,
To Clusium's royal 'ome:
An' round these bloomin' temples 'ang
The bloomin' shields o' Rome.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

You better go. You ain't like to shoot yourself—not while there's a chanst of liquor. Me an' Learoyd'll stay at 'ome an' keep shop—'case of anythin' turnin' up. But you go out with a gas-pipe gun an' fetch the little peacockses or some-thin'. You kin get one day's leave easy as winkin'. Go along an' get it, an' get peacockses or some-thin'."

"Jock," said Mulvaney, turning to Learoyd, who was half asleep under the shadow of the bank. He roused slowly.

"Sitha, Mulvaaney, go," said he.

And Mulvaney went; cursing his allies with Irish fluency and barrack-room point.

"Take note," said he, when he had won his holiday, and appeared dressed in his roughest clothes with the only other regimental fowling piece in his hand. "Take note, Jock, an' you Orth'ris, I am goin' in the face av my own will—all for to please you. I misdoubt anythin' will come av permiscuous huntin' afther peacockses in a desolit lan'; an' I know that I will lie down an' die wid thirrst. Me catch peacockses for you, ye lazy scutts—an' be sacrificed by the peasantry—Ugh!"

He waved a huge paw and went away.

At twilight, long before the appointed hour, he returned empty-handed, much begrimed with dirt.

"Peacockses?" queried Ortheris from the safe rest of a barrack-room table whereon he was

KRISHNA MULVANEY

smoking cross-legged, Learoyd fast asleep on a bench.

"Jock," said Mulvaney, without answering, as he stirred up the sleeper. "Jock, can ye fight? Will ye fight?"

Very slowly the meaning of the words communicated itself to the half-roused man. He understood—and again—what might these things mean? Mulvaney was shaking him savagely. Meantime the men in the room howled with delight. There was war in the confederacy at last—war and the breaking of bonds.

Barrack room etiquette is stringent. On the direct challenge must follow the direct reply. This is more binding than the ties of tried friendship. Once again Mulvaney repeated the question. Learoyd answered by the only means in his power, and so swiftly that the Irishman had barely time to avoid the blow. The laughter around increased. Learoyd looked bewilderedly at his friend—himself as greatly bewildered. Ortheris dropped from the table because his world was falling.

"Come outside," said Mulvaney, and as the occupants of the barrack-room prepared joyously to follow, he turned and said furiously, "There will be no fight this night—unless any wan av you is wishful to assist. The man that does, follows on."

No man moved. The three passed out into the moonlight, Learoyd fumbling with the but-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

tons of his coat. The parade-ground was deserted except for the scurrying jackals. Mulvaney's impetuous rush carried his companions far into the open ere Learoyd attempted to turn round and continue the discussion.

"Be still now. 'Twas my fault for beginning things in the middle av an end, Jock. I should ha' comminst wid an explanation; but Jock, dear, on your sowl are ye fit, think you, for the finest fight that iver was—betther than fightin' me? Consider before ye answer."

More than ever puzzled, Learoyd turned round two or three times, felt an arm, kicked tentatively, and answered, "Ah'm fit." He was accustomed to fight blindly at the bidding of the superior mind. They sat them down, the men looking on from afar, and Mulvaney untangled himself in mighty words.

"Followin' your fools' scheme I wint out into the thrackless desert beyond the barricks. An' there I met a pious Hindu dhriving a bullock-kyart. I tuk it for granted he wud be delighted for to convoy me a piece, an' I jumped in"—

"You long, lazy, black-haired swine," drawled Ortheris, who would have done the same thing under similar circumstances.

"'Twas the height av policy. That naygur-man dhruv miles an' miles—as far as the new railway line they're buildin' now back av the Tavi river. "'Tis a kyart for dhirt only,' says he now an' again timoreously, to get me out av ut. 'Dhirt

KRISHNA MULVANEY

I am,' sez I, 'an' the dhryest that you iver kyarted. Dhrive on, me son, an' glory be wid you.' At that I wint to slape, an' took no heed till he pulled up on the embankmint av the line where the coolies were pilin' mud. There was a matther av two thousand coolies on that line—you remember that. Prisintly a bell rang, an' they throops off to a big pay-shed. 'Where's the white man in charge?' sez I to my kyart-dhriver. 'In the shed,' sez he, 'engaged on a raffle.'—'A fwhat?' sez I. 'Raffle,' sez he. 'You take ticket. He take money. You get nothin'.'—'Oho!' sez I, 'that's fwhat the shuperior an' cultivated man calls a raffle, me misbeguided child av darkness an' sin. Lead on to that raffle, though fwhat the mischief 'tis doin' so far away from uts home—which is the charity-bazaar at Christmas, an' the colonel's wife grinnin' behind the tea-table—is more than I know.' Wid that I wint to the shed an' found 'twas pay-day among the coolies. Their wages was on a table forninst a big, fine, red buck av a man—sivun fut high, four fut wide, an' three fut thick, wid a fist on him like a corn-sack. He was payin' the coolies fair an' easy, but he wud ask each man if he wud raffle that month, an' each man sez, 'Yes,' av course. Thin he wud deduct from their wages accordin'. Whin all was paid, he filled an ould cigar-box full av gun-wads an' scatthered ut among the coolies. They did not take much joy av that performince, an' small wondher. A man close to me picks up

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

a black gun-wad an' sings out, 'I have ut.'—'Good may ut do you,' sez I. The coolie wint forward to this big, fine, red man, who threw a cloth off av the most sumpshus, jooled, enamelled an' variously bedivilled sedan-chair I iver saw."

"Sedan-chair! Put your 'ead in a bag. That was a palanquin. Don't yer know a palanquin when you see it?" said Ortheris with great scorn.

"I chuse to call ut sedan chair, an' chair ut shall be, little man," continued the Irishman. "'Twas a most amazin' chair—all lined wid pink silk an' fitted wid red silk curtains. 'Here ut is,' sez the red man. 'Here ut is,' sez the coolie; then he grinned weakly-ways. Is ut any use to you?' sez the red man. 'No,' sez the coolie; 'I'd like to make a prisint av ut to you.'—'I am graciously pleased to accept that same,' sez the red man; an' at that all the coolies cried aloud in fwhat was mint for cheerful notes, an' wint back to their diggin', lavin' me alone in the shed. The red man saw me, an' his face grew blue on his big, fat neck. 'Fwhat d'you want here?' sez he. 'Standin'-room an' no more,' sez I, 'unless it may be fwhat ye niver had, an' that's manners, ye rafflin' ruffian,' for I was not goin' to have the Service throd upon. 'Out of this,' sez he. 'I'm in charge av this section av construction.'—'I'm in charge av mesilf,' sez I, 'an' it's like I will stay a while. D'ye raffle much in these parts?'—'Fwhat's that to you?' sez he. 'Nothin',' sez I, 'but a great dale to you, for begad I'm thinkin' you get the full

KRISHNA MULVANEY

half av your revenue from that sedan-chair. Is ut always raffled so? I sez, an' wid that I wint to a coolie to ask questions. Bhoys, that man's name is Dearsley, an' he's ben rafflin' that ould sedan-chair monthly this matther av nine months. Ivry coolie on the section takes a ticket—or he gives 'em the go—wanst a month on pay-day. Ivry coolie that wins ut gives ut back to him, for 'tis too big to carry away, an' he'd sack the man that thried to sell ut. That Dearsley has been makin' the rowlin' wealth av Roshus by nefarious rafflin'. Think av the burning shame to the sufferin' coolie-man that the army in Injia are bound to protect an' nourish in their bosoms! Two thousand coolies defrauded wanst a month!"

"Dom t' coolies. Has't gotten t' cheer, man?" said Learoyd.

"Hould on. Havin' onearthed this amazin' an' stupenjus fraud committed by the man Dearsley, I hild a council av war; he thryin' all the time to sejuce me into a fight wid opprobrious language. That sedan-chair niver belonged by right to any foreman av coolies. 'Tis a king's chair or a quane's. There's gold on ut an' silk an' all manner av trapesemints. Bhoys, 'tis not for me to countenance any sort av wrong-doin'—me bein' the ould man—but—anyway he has had ut nine months, an' he dare not make throuble av ut was taken from him. F'ive miles away, or ut may be six"—

There was a long pause and the jackals howled

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

merrily. Learoyd bared one arm, and contemplated it in the moonlight. Then he nodded partly to himself and partly to his friends. Ortheris wriggled with suppressed emotion.

"I thought ye wud see the reasonableness av ut," said Mulvaney. "I make bould to say as much to the man before. He was for a direct front attack—fut, horse, an' guns—an' all for nothin', seein' that I had no thransport to convey the machine away. 'I will not argue wid you,' sez I, 'this day, but subsequently, Mister Dearsley, me rafflin' jool, we talk ut out lengthways. 'Tis no good policy to swindle the naygur av his hard-earned emolumints, an' by presint informashin'—'twas the kyart man that tould me—'ye've been perpethrating that same for nine months. But I'm a just man,' sez I, 'an' overlookin' the presumpshin that yondher settie wid the gilt top was not come by honust—at that he turned sky-green, so I knew things was more thrue than tellable—not come by honust, I'm willin' to compound the felony for this month's winnin's.'"

"Ah! Ho!" from Learoyd and Ortheris.

"That man Dearsley's rushin' on his fate," continued Mulvaney, solemnly wagging his head. "All Hell had no name bad enough for me that tide. Faith, he called me a robber! Me! that was savin' him from continuin' in his evil ways widout a remonstrance—an' to a man av conscience a remonstrance may change the chune av his life.

KRISHNA MULVANEY

' 'Tis not for me to argue,' sez I, 'fwhatever ye are, Mister Dearsley, but, by my hand, I'll take away the temptation for you that lies in that sedan-chair.'—'You will have to fight me for ut,' sez he, 'for well I know you will never dare make report to any one.'—'Fight I will,' sez I, 'but not this day, for I'm rejuiced for want av nourishment.'—'Ye're an ould bould hand,' sez he, sizin' me up an' down; 'an' a jool av a fight we will have. Eat now an' dhrink, an' go your way.' Wid that he gave me some hump an' whisky—good whisky—an' we talked av this an' that the while. 'It goes hard on me now,' sez I, wipin' my mouth, 'to confiscate that piece av furniture, but justice is justice.'—'Ye've not got ut yet,' sez he; 'there's the fight between.'—'There is,' sez I, 'an' a good fight. Ye shall have the pick av the best quality in my rigimint for the dinner you have given this day.' Thin I came hot-foot to you two. Hould your tongue, the both. 'Tis this way. Tomorrow we three will go there an' he shall have his pick betune me an' Jock. Jock's a deceivin' fighter, for he is all fat to the eye, an' he moves slow. Now I'm 'all beef to the look, an' I move quick. By my reckonin' the Dearsley man won't take me; so me an' Orth'ris'll see fair play. Jock, I tell you, 'twill be big fightin'—whipped, wid the cream above the jam. Afther the business 'twill take a good three av us—Jock'll be very hurt—to haul away that sedan-chair."

"Palanquin." This from Ortheris.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"F'whatever ut is, we must have ut. 'Tis the only sellin' piece av property widin reach that we can get so cheap. An' f'what's a fight afther all? He has robbed the naygur-man, dishonust. We rob him honust for the sake av the whisky he gave me."

"But wot'll we do with the bloomin' article when we've got it? Them palanquins are as big as 'ouses, an' uncommon 'ard to sell, as McCleary said when ye stole the sentry-box from the Curragh."

"Who's goin' to do t' fightin'?" said Learoyd, and Ortheris subsided. The three returned to barracks without a word. Mulvaney's last argument clinched the matter. This palanquin was property, vendible, and to be attained in the simplest and least embarrassing fashion. It would eventually become beer. Great was Mulvaney.

Next afternoon a procession of three formed itself and disappeared into the scrub in the direction of the new railway line. Learoyd alone was without care, for Mulvaney dived darkly into the future, and little Ortheris feared the unknown. What befell at that interview in the lonely payshed by the side of the half-built embankment, only a few hundred coolies know, and their tale is a confusing one, running thus—

"We were at work. Three men in red coats came. They saw the Sahib—Dearsley Sahib. They made oration; and noticeably the small man among the red-coats. Dearsley Sahib also made

KRISHNA MULVANEY

oration, and used many very strong words. Upon this talk they departed together to an open space, and there the fat man in the red coat fought with Dearsley Sahib after the custom of white men—with his hands, making no noise, and never at all pulling Dearsley Sahib's hair. Such of us as were not afraid beheld these things for just so long a time as a man needs to cook the midday meal. The small man in the red coat had possessed himself of Dearsley Sahib's watch. No, he did not steal that watch. He held it in his hand, and at certain seasons made outcry, and the twain ceased their combat, which was like the combat of young bulls in spring. Both men were soon all red, but Dearsley Sahib was much more red than the other. Seeing this, and fearing for his life—because we greatly loved him—some fifty of us made shift to rush upon the red-coats. But a certain man—very black as to the hair, and in no way to be confused with the small man, or the fat man who fought—that man, we affirm, ran upon us, and of us he embraced some ten or fifty in both arms, and beat our heads together, so that our livers turned to water, and we ran away. It is not good to interfere in the fightings of white men. After that Dearsley Sahib fell and did not rise, these men jumped upon his stomach and despoiled him of all his money, and attempted to fire the pay-shed, and departed. Is it true that Dearsley Sahib makes no complaint of these latter things having been done? We were senseless

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

with fear, and do not at all remember. There was no palanquin near the pay-shed. What do we know about palanquins? Is it true that Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place, on account of his sickness, for ten days? This is the fault of those bad men in the red coats, who should be severely punished; for Dearsley Sahib is both our father and mother, and we love him much. Yet, if Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place at all, we will speak the truth. There was a palanquin, for the up-keep of which we were forced to pay nine-tenths of our monthly wage. On such mulctings Dearsley Sahib allowed us to make obeisance to him before the palanquin. What could we do? We were poor men. He took a full half of our wages. Will the Government repay us those moneys? Those three men in red coats bore the palanquin upon their shoulders and departed. All the money that Dearsley Sahib had taken from us was in the cushions of that palanquin. Therefore they stole. Thousands of rupees were there—all our money. It was our bank-box, to fill which we cheerfully contributed to Dearsley Sahib three-sevenths of our monthly wage. Why does the white man look upon us with the eye of disfavor? Before God, there was a palanquin, and now there is no palanquin; and if they send the police here to make inquisition, we can only say that there never has been any palanquin. Why should a palanquin be near these works? We are poor men, and we know nothing.”

KRISHNA MULVANEY

Such is the simplest version of the simplest story connected with the descent upon Dearsley. From the lips of the coolies I received it. Dearsley himself was in no condition to say anything, and Mulvaney preserved a massive silence, broken only by the occasional licking of the lips. He had seen a fight so gorgeous that even his power of speech was taken from him. I respected that reserve until, three days after the affair, I discovered in a disused stable in my quarters a palanquin of unchastened splendor—evidently in past days the litter of a queen. The pole whereby it swung between the shoulders of the bearers was rich with the painted *papier-maché* of Cashmere. The shoulder-pads were of yellow silk. The panels of the litter itself were ablaze with the loves of all the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon—lacquer on cedar. The cedar sliding doors were fitted with hasps of translucent Jaipur enamel and ran in grooves shod with silver. The cushions were of brocaded Delhi silk, and the curtains which once hid any glimpse of the beauty of the king's palace were stiff with gold. Closer investigation showed that the entire fabric was everywhere rubbed and discolored by time and wear; but even thus it was sufficiently gorgeous to deserve housing on the threshold of a royal zenana. I found no fault with it, except that it was in my stable. Then, trying to lift it by the silvershod shoulder pole, I laughed. The road from Dearsley pay-shed to the cantonment was

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

a narrow and uneven one, and, traversed by three very inexperienced palanquin-bearers, one of whom was sorely battered about the head, must have been a path of torment. Still I did not quite recognize the right of the three musketeers to turn me into a "fence" for stolen property.

"I'm askin' you to warehouse ut," said Mulvaney when he was brought to consider the question. "There's no steal in ut. Dearsley tould us we cud have ut if we fought. Jock fought—an', oh, sorr, when the throuble was at uts finest an' Jock was bleedin' like a stuck pig, an' little Orth'ris was shquealin' on one leg chewin' big bites out av Dearsley's watch, I ud ha' given my place at the fight to have had you see wan round. He tuk Jock, as I suspicioned he would, an' Jock was deceptive. Nine roun's they were even matched, an' at the tenth—About that palanquin now. There's not the least throuble in the world, or we wud not ha' brought ut here. You will on-dherstand that the Queen—God bless her!—does not reckon for a private soldier to kape elephints an' palanquins an' sich in barracks. Afther we had dhragged ut down from Dearsley's through that cruel scrub that near broke Orth'ris's heart, we set ut in the ravine for a night; an' a thief av a porcupine an' a civet-cat av a jackal roosted in ut, as well we knew in the mornin'. I put ut to you, sor, is an elegint palanquin, fit for the princess, the natural abidin' place av all the vermin in cantonmints? We brought ut to you afther dark,

KRISHNA MULVANEY

and put ut in your sthable. Do not let your conscience prick. Think av the rejoicin' men in the pay-shed yonder—lookin' at Dearsley wid his head tied up in a towel—an' well knowin' that they can dhraw their pay ivry month widout stoppages for riffles. Indirectly, sorr, you have rescued from an onprincipled son av a night-hawk the peasantry av a numerous village. An' besides, will I let that sedan-chair rot on our hands? Not I. 'Tis not every day a piece av pure joolry comes into the market. There's not a king widin these forty miles"—he waved his hand round the dusty horizon—"not a king wud not be glad to buy ut. Some day meself, when I have leisure, I'll take ut up along the road an' dishpose av ut."

"How?" said I, for I knew the man was capable of anything.

"Get into ut, av coorse, and keep wan eye open through the curtains. Whin I see a likely man av the native persuasion, I will descind blushin' from my canopy and say, 'Buy a palanquin, ye black scutt?' I will have to hire four men to carry me first, though; and that's impossible till next pay-day."

Curiously enough, Learoyd, who had fought for the prize, and in the winning secured the highest pleasure life had to offer him, was altogether disposed to undervalue it, while Ortheris openly said it would be better to break the thing up. Dearsley, he argued, might be a many-sided man, capable, despite his magnificent fighting

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

qualities, of setting in motion the machinery of the civil law—a thing much abhorred by the soldier. Under any circumstances their fun had come and passed; the next pay-day was close at hand, when there would be beer for all. Wherefore longer conserve the painted palanquin?

“A first-class rifle-shot an’ a good little man av your inches you are,” said Mulvaney. “But you niver had a head worth a soft-boiled egg. ’Tis me has to lie awake av nights schamin’ an’ plottin’ for the three av us. Orth’ris, me son, ’tis no matther av a few gallons av beer—no, nor twenty gallons—but tubs an’ vats an’ firkins in that sedan-chair. Who ut was, an’ what ut was, an’ how ut got there, we do not know; but I know in my bones that you an’ me an’ Jock wid his sprained thumb will get a fortune thereby. Lave me alone, an’ let me think.”

Meantime the palanquin stayed in my stall, the key of which was in Mulvaney’s hands.

Pay-day came, and with it beer. It was not in experience to hope that Mulvaney, dried by four week’s drought, would avoid excess. Next morning he and the palanquin had disappeared. He had taken the precaution of getting three days’ leave “to see a friend on the railway,” and the colonel, well knowing that the seasonal outburst was near, and hoping it would spend its force beyond the limits of his jurisdiction, cheerfully gave him all he demanded. At this point Mul-

KRISHNA MULVANEY

vanev's history, as recorded in the mess-room, stopped.

Ortheris carried it not much further. "No, 'e wasn't drunk," said the little man loyally, "the liquor was no more than feelin' its way round inside of 'im; but 'e went an' filled that ole bloomin' palanquin with bottles 'fore he went off. 'E's gone an' 'ired six men to carry 'im, an' I 'ad to 'elp 'im into 'is nupshal couch, 'cause 'e wouldn't 'ear reason. 'E's gone off in 'is shirt an' trouses, swearin' tremenjuss—gone down the road in the palanquin, wavin' 'is legs out o' windy."

"Yes," said I, "but where?"

"Now you arx me a question. 'E said 'e was goin' to sell that palanquin, but from observations what happened when I was stuffin' in through the door, I fancy 'e's gone to the new embankment to mock at Dearsley. 'Soon as Jock's off duty I'm goin' there to see if 'e's safe—not Mulvaney, but t'other man. My saints, but I pity 'im as 'elps Terence out o' the palanquin when 'e's once fair drunk!"

"He'll come back without harm," I said.

"'Corse 'e will. On'y question is, what'll 'e be doin' on the road? Killing Dearsley, like as not. 'E shouldn't 'a gone without Jock or me."

Reinforced by Learoyd, Ortheris sought the foreman of the coolie-gang. Dearsley's head was still embellished with towels. Mulvaney, drunk or sober, would have struck no man in that condition, and Dearsley indignantly denied that he

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

would have taken advantage of the intoxicated brave.

"I had my pick o' you two," he explained to Learoyd, "and you got my palanquin—not before I'd made my profit on it. Why'd I do harm when everything's settled? Your man *did* come here—drunk as Davy's sow on a frosty night—came a-purpose to mock me—stuck his head out of the door an' called me a crucified hodman. I made him drunker, an' sent him along. But I never touched him."

To these things Learoyd, slow to perceive the evidences of sincerity, answered only, "if owt comes to Mulvaney 'long o' you, I'll gripple you, clouts or no clouts on your ugly head, an' I'll draw t' throat twistways, man. See there, now."

The embassy removed itself, and Dearsley, the battered, laughed alone over his supper that evening.

Three days passed—a fourth and a fifth. The week drew to a close and Mulvaney did not return. He, his royal palanquin, and his six attendants, had vanished into air. A very large and very tipsy soldier, his feet sticking out of the litter of a reigning princess, is not a thing to travel along the ways without comment. Yet no man of all the country round had seen any such wonder. He was, and he was not; and Learoyd suggested the immediate smashment of Dearsley as a sacrifice to his ghost. Ortheris insisted that

KRISHNA MULVANEY

all was well, and in the light of past experience his hopes seemed reasonable.

"When Mulvaney goes up the road," said he, "'e's like to go a very long ways up, specially when 'e's so blue drunk as 'e is now. But what gits me 'is not bein' 'eard of pullin' wool off the niggers somewheres about. That don't look good. The drink must ha' died out in 'im by this, unless 'e's broke a bank, an' then—Why don't 'e come back? 'E didn't ought to ha' gone off without us."

Even Ortheris's heart sank at the end of the seventh day, for half the regiment were out scouring the country-side, and Learoyd had been forced to fight two men who hinted openly that Mulvaney had deserted. To do him justice, the colonel laughed at the notion, even when it was put forward by his much-trusted adjutant.

"Mulvaney would as soon think of deserting as you would," said he. "No; he's either fallen into a mischief among the villagers—and yet that isn't likely, for he'd blarney himself out of the Pit; or else he is engaged on urgent private affairs—some stupendous devilment that we shall hear of at mess after it has been the round of the barrack-rooms. The worst of it is that I shall have to give him twenty-eight days' confinement at least for being absent without leave, just when I most want him to lick the new batch of recruits into shape. I never knew a man who could put a

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

polish on young soldiers as quickly as Mulvaney can. How does he do it?"

"With blarney and the buckle-end of a belt, sir," said the adjutant. "He is worth a couple of non-commissioned officers when we are dealing with an Irish draft, and the London lads seem to adore him. The worst of it is that if he goes to the cells the other two are neither to hold nor to bind till he comes out again. I believe Ortheris preaches mutiny on those occasions, and I know that the mere presence of Learoyd mourning for Mulvaney kills all the cheerfulness of his room. The sergeants tell me that he allows no man to laugh when he feels unhappy. They are a queer gang."

"For all that, I wish we had a few more of them. I like a well-conducted regiment, but these pasty-faced, shifty-eyed, mealy-mouthed young slouchers from the depot worry me sometimes with their offensive virtue. They don't seem to have backbone enough to do anything but play cards and prowl around the married quarters. I believe I'd forgive that old villain on the spot if he turned up with any sort of explanation that I could in decency accept."

"Not likely to be much difficulty about that, sir," said the adjutant. "Mulvaney's explanations are only one degree less wonderful than his performances. They say that when he was in the Black Tyrone, before he came to us, he was discovered on the banks of the Liffey trying to sell

KRISHNA MULVANEY

his colonel's charger to a Donegal dealer as a perfect lady's hack. Shackbolt commanded the Tyrone then."

"Shackbolt must have had 'apoplexy at the thought of his ramping war-horses answering to that description. He used to buy unbacked devils, and tame them on some pet theory of starvation. What did Mulvaney say?"

"That he was a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, anxious to 'sell the poor baste where he would get something to fill out his dimples.' Shackbolt laughed, but I fancy that was why Mulvaney exchanged to ours."

"I wish he were back," said the colonel; "for I like him and believe he likes me."

That evening, to cheer our souls, Learoyd, Ortheris, and I went into the waste to smoke out a porcupine. All the dogs attended, but even their clamor—and they began to discuss the shortcomings of porcupines before they left cantonments—could not take us out of ourselves. A large, low moon turned the tops of the plume-grass to silver, and the stunted camelthorn bushes and sour tamarisks into the likeness of trooping devils. The smell of the sun had not left the earth, and little aimless winds blowing across the rose-gardens to the southward brought the scent of dried roses and water. Our fire once started, and the dogs craftily disposed to wait the dash of the porcupine, we climbed to the top

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

of a rainscarred hillock of earth, and looked across the scrub seamed with cattle paths, white with long grass, and dotted with spots of level pond-bottom, where the snipe would gather in winter.

"This," said Ortheris, with a sigh, as he took in the unkempt desolation of it all, "this is sanguinary. This is unusually sanguinary. Sort o' mad country. Like a grate when the fire's put out by the sun." He shaded his eyes against the moonlight. "An' there's a loony dancin' in the middle of it all. Quite right. I'd dance too if I wasn't so downheart."

There pranced a Portent in the face of the moon—a huge and ragged spirit of the waste, that flapped its wings from afar. It had risen out of the earth; it was coming towards us, and its outline was never twice the same. The toga, table-cloth, or dressing-gown, whatever the creature wore, took a hundred shapes. Once it stopped on a neighboring mound and flung all its legs and arms to the winds.

"My, but that scarecrow 'as got 'em bad!" said Ortheris. "Seems like if 'e comes any further we'll 'ave to argify with 'im."

Learoyd raised himself from the dirt as a bull clears his flanks of the wallow. And as a bull bellows, so he, after a short minute at gaze, gave tongue to the stars.

"MULVAANEY! MULVAANEY! A-hoo!"

Oh then it was that we yelled, and the figure

KRISHNA MULVANEY

dipped into the hollow, till, with a crash of rending grass, the lost one strode up to the light of the fire, and disappeared to the waist in a wave of joyous dogs! Then Learoyd and Ortheris gave greeting, bass and falsetto together, both swallowing a lump in the throat.

"You damned fool!" said they, and severally pounded him with their fists.

"Go easy!" he answered, wrapping a huge arm around each. "I would have you to know that I am a god, to be treated as such—tho', by my faith, I fancy I've got to go to the guard-room just like a privit soldier."

The latter part of the sentence destroyed the suspicions raised by the former. Anyone would have been justified in regarding Mulvaney as mad. He was hatless and shoeless, and his shirt and trousers were dropping off him. But he wore one wondrous garment—a gigantic cloak that fell from collar-bone to heel—of pale pink silk wrought all over in cunningest needlework of hands long since dead, with the loves of the Hindu gods. The monstrous figures leaped in and out of the light of the fire as he settled the folds round him.

Ortheris handled the stuff respectfully for a moment while I was trying to remember where I had seen it before. Then he screamed, "What 'ave you done with the palanquin? You're wearin' the linin'."

"I am," said the Irishman, "an' by the same

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

token the 'broidery is scrapin' my hide off. I've lived in this sumpshus counterpane for four days. Me son, I begin to ondherstand why the naygur is no use. Widout me boots, an' me trousies like an openwork stocking on a gyurl's leg at a dance, I begin to feel like a naygur-man—all feaful an' timoreous. Give me a pipe an' I'll tell on."

He lit a pipe, resumed his grip of his two friends, and rocked to and fro in a gale of laughter.

"Mulvaney," said Ortheris sternly, "tain't no time for laughin'. You've given Jock an' me more trouble than you're worth. You 'ave been absent without leave an' you'll go into cells for that; an' you 'ave come back disgustin'ly dressed an' most improper in the linin' o' that bloomin' palanquin. Instid of which you laugh. An' *we* thought you was dead all the time."

"Bhoys," said the culprit, still shaking gently, "whin I've done my tale you may cry if you like, an' little Orth'ris here can thrample my inside out. Ha' done an' listen. My performinces have been stupenjus: my luck has been the blessed luck av the British Army—an' there's no betther than that. I went out dhrunk an' dhrinkin' in the palanquin, and I have come back a pink god. Did any of you go to Dearsley afther my time was up? He was at the bottom of ut all."

"Ah said so," murmured Learoyd. "To-mor-row ah'll smash t' face in upon his heead."

KRISHNA MULVANEY

"Ye will not. Dearsley's a jool av a man. Afther Ortheris had put me into the palanquin an' the six bearer-men were gruntin' down the road, I tuk thought to mock Dearsley for that fight. So I tould thim, 'Go to the embankmint,' and there, bein' most amazin' full, I shtuck my head out av the concern an' passed compliments wid Dearsley. I must ha' miscalled him outrageous, for whin I am that way the power av the tongue comes on me. I can bare remimber tellin' him that his mouth opened endways like the mouth av a skate, which was throe afther Learoyd had handled ut; an' I clear remimber his takin' no manner nor matter av offence, but givin' me a big dhrink of beer. 'Twas the beer did the thrick, for I crawled back into the palanquin, steppin' on me right ear wid me left foot, an' thin I slept like the dead. Wasn't I half-roused, an' begad the noise in my head was trem-enjus—roarin' and rattlin' an' poundin', such as was quite new to me. 'Mother av Mercy,' thinks I, 'phwat a concertina I will have on my shoulders whin I wake!' An' wid that I curls myself up to sleep before ut should get hold on me. 'Bhoys, that noise was not dhrink, 'twas the rattle av a thrain!'"

There followed an impressive pause.

"Yes, he had put me on a thrain—put me, palanquin an' all, an' six black assassins av his own coolies that was in his nefarious confidence, on the flat av a ballast-thruck, and we were rowlin'

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

an' bowlin' along to Benares. Glory be to that I did not wake up thin an' introjuce myself to the coolies. As I was sayin', I slept for the betther part av a day an' a night. But remimber you, that that man Dearsley had packed me off on wan av his material-thrains to Benares, all for to make me overstay my leave an' get me into the cells."

The explanation was an eminently rational one. Benares lay at least ten hours by rail from the cantonments, and nothing in the world could have saved Mulvaney from arrest as a deserter had he appeared there in the apparel of his orgies. Dearsley had not forgotten to take revenge. Learoyd, drawing back a little, began to place soft blows over selected portions of Mulvaney's body. His thoughts were away on the embankment, and they meditated evil for Dearsley. Mulvaney continued—

"Whin I was full awake the palanquin was set down in a street, I suspicioned, for I cud hear people passin' an' talkin'. But I knew well I was far from home. There is a queer smell upon our cantonments—a smell av dried earth an' brick kilns wid whiffs of cavalry stable-litter. This place smelt marigold flowers an' bad water, an' wanst somethin' alive came an' blew heavy with his muzzle at the chink av the shutter. 'It's in a village I am,' thinks I to myself, 'an' the parochial buffaio is investigatin' the palanquin.' But anyways I had no desire to move. Only lie

KRISHNA MULVANEY

still whin you're in foreign parts an' the standin' luck av the British Army will carry ye through. That is an epigram. I made ut.

"Thin a lot av whisperin' divils surrounded the palanquin. 'Take ut up,' sez wan man. 'But who'll pay us?' sez another. 'The Maharanee's minister, av coorse,' sez the man. 'Oho!' sez I to myself, 'I'm a quane in me own right, wid a minister to pay me expenses. I'll be an emperor if I lie still long enough; but this is no village I've found.' I lay quiet, but I gummed me right eye to a crack av the shutters, an' I saw that the whole street was crammed with palanquins an' horses, an' a sprinklin' av naked priests all yellow powder an' tigers' tails. But I may tell you, Orth'ris, an' you, Learoyd, that av all the palanquins ours was the most imperial an' magnificent. Now a palanquin means a native lady all the world over, except whin a soldier av the Quane happens to be takin' a ride. 'Women an' priests!' sez I. 'Your father's son is in the right pew this time, Terence. There will be proceedin's.' Six black divils in pink muslin tuk up the palanquin, an' oh! but the rowlin' an' the rockin' made me sick. Thin we got fair jammed among the palanquins — not more than fifty av them — an' we grated an' bumped like Queenstown potato-smacks in a runnin' tide. I cud hear the women gigglin' and squirkin' in their palanquins, but mine was the royal equipage. They made way for ut, an', begad, the pink muslin men o' mine were howlin',

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

'Room for the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun.'
Do you know aught av the lady, sorr?"

"Yes," said I. "She is a very estimable old queen of the Central Indian States, and they say she is fat. How on earth could she go to Benares without all the city knowing her palanquin?"

"'Twas the eternal foolishness of the naygurman. They saw the palanquin lying loneful an' forlorncome, an' the beauty av ut, after Dearsley's men had dhropped ut and gone away, an' they gave us the best name that occurred to thim. Quite right too. For aught we know the ould lady was travelin' *incog*—like me. I'm glad to hear she's fat. I was no light weight myself, an' my men were mortal anxious to dhrop me under a great big archway promiscuously ornamented wid the most improper carvin's an' cuttin's I iver saw. Begad! they made me blush—like a—like a Maharanee."

"The temple of Prithi-Devil," I murmured, remembering the monstrous horrors of that sculptured archway at Benares.

"Pretty Devilskins, savin' your presence, sorr! There was nothin' pretty about it, except me. 'Twas all half dhark, an' whin the coolies left they shut a big black gate behind av us, an' half a company av fat yellow priests began pullyhavin' the palanquins into a dharker place yet—a big stone wall full av pillars, an' gods, an' incense, an' all manner av similar thruck. The gate dis-

KRISHNA MULVANEY

concerted me, for I perceived I wud have to go forward to get out, my retreat bein' cut off. By the same token a good priest makes a bad palanquin-coolie. Begad! they nearly turned me inside out draggin' the palanquin to the temple. Now the disposishin av the forces inside was this way. The Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun—that was me—lay by the favor av Providence on the far left flank behind the dhark av a pillar carved with elephants' heads. The remainder av the palanquins was in a big half circle facing into the biggest, fattest, an' most amazin' she-god that iver I dreamed av. Her head ran up into the black above us, an' her feet stuck out in the light av a little fire av melted butter that a priest was feedin' out av a butter-dish. Thin a man began to sing an' play on somethin' back in the dhark, an' 'twas a queer song. Ut made my hair lift on the back av my neck. Thin the doors av all the palanquins slid back, an' the women bundled out. I saw what I'll niver see again. 'Twas more glorious than thransformations at a pantomime, for they was in pink an' blue an' silver an' red an' grass green, wid di'monds an' im'ralds an' great red rubies all over thim. But that was the least part av the glory. O bhoys, they were more lovely than the like av any loveliness in hiven; ay, their little bare feet were better than the white hands av a lord's lady, an' their mouths were like puckered roses, an' their eyes were bigger an' dharker than the eyes av any livin' women I've seen. Ye

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

may laugh, but I'm speakin' truth. I niver saw the like, an' niver I will again."

"Seeing that in all probability you were watching the wives and daughters of most of the kings of India, the chances are that you won't," I said, for it was dawning on me that Mulvaney had stumbled upon a big Queen's Praying at Benares.

"I niver will," he said, mournfully. "That sight doesn't come twist to any man. It made me ashamed to watch. A fat priest knocked at my door. I didn't think he'd have the insolence to disturb the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun, so I lay still. 'The old cow's asleep,' sez he to another. 'Let her be,' sez that. ' 'Twill be long before she has a calf!' I might ha' known before he spoke that all a woman prays for in Injia—an' for matter o' that in England too—is childher. That made me more sorry I'd come, me bein', as you well know, a childless man."

He was silent for a moment, thinking of his little son, dead many years ago.

"They prayed, an' the butter-fires blazed up an' the incense turned everything blue, an' between that an' the fires the women looked as tho' they were all ablaze an' twinklin'. They took hold av the she-god's knees, they cried out an' they threw themselves about, an' that world-without-end-amen music was dhrivin' thim mad. Mother av Hiven! how they cried, an' the ould she-god grinnin' above thim all so scornful! The dhrink was dyin' out in me fast, an' I was thinkin'

KRISHNA MULVANEY

harder than the thoughts wud go through my head—thinkin' how to get out, an' all manner of nonsense as well. The women were rockin' in rows, their di'mond belts clickin', an' the tears runnin' out betune their hands, an' the lights were goin' lower an' dharker. Thin there was a blaze like lightnin' from the roof, an' that showed me the inside av the palanquin, an' at the end where my foot was, stood the livin' spit an' image o' myself worked on the livin'. This man here, ut was."

He hunted in the folds of his pink cloak, ran a hand under one, and thrust into the firelight a foot-long embroidered presentment of the great god Krishna, playing on a flute. The heavy jowl, the staring eye, and the blue-black moustache of the god made up a far-off resemblance to Mulvaney.

"The blaze was gone in a wink, but the whole schame came to me thin. I believe I was mad too. I slid the off-shutter open an' rowled out into the dhark behind the elephint-head pillar, tucked up my trousies to my knees, slipped off my boots an' tuk a general hold av all the pink linin' av the palanquin. Glory be, ut ripped out like a woman's dhriss whin you tread on ut at a sergeant's ball, an' a bottle came with ut. I tuk the bottle an' the next minit I was out av the dhark av the pillar, the pink linin' wrapped round me most graceful, the music thunderin' like kettle-drums, an' a could draft blowin' round my bare legs. By this hand that did ut, I was Khrishna

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

tootlin' on the flute—the god that the rig'mental chaplain talks about. A sweet sight I must ha' looked. I knew my eyes were big, and my face was wax-white, an' at the worst I must ha' looked like a ghost. But they took me for the livin' god. The music stopped, and the women were dead dumb an' I crooked my legs like a shepherd on a china basin, an' I did the ghost-waggle with my feet as I had done ut at the rig'mental theatre many times, an' I slid acrost the width av that temple in front av the she-god tootlin' on the beer bottle."

"Wot did you toot?" demanded Ortheris the practical.

"Me? Oh!" Mulvaney sprang up, suiting the action to the word, and sliding gravely in front of us, a dilapidated but imposing deity in the half light. "I sang—

"Only say
You'll be Mrs. Brallaghan.
Don't say nay,
Charmin' Judy Callaghan.

I didn't know me own voice when I sang. An' oh! 'twas pitiful to see the women. The darlin's were down on their knees. When I passed the last wan I cud see her poor little fingers workin' one in another as if she wanted to touch my feet. So I dhrew the tail av this pink overcoat over her head for the greater honor, an' I slid into the dhark on the other side av the temple, and fetched up in the arms of a big fat priest. All I wanted

KRISHNA MULVANEY

was to get away clear. So I tuk him by his greasy throat an' shut the speech out av him. 'Out!' sez I. 'Which way, ye fat heathen?'—'Oh!' sez he. 'Man,' sez I. 'White man, soldier man, common soldier man. Where in the name av confusion is the back door?' The women in the temple were still on their faces, an' a young priest was holdin' out his arms above their heads.

" 'This way,' sez my fat friend, duckin' behind a big bull-god an' divin' into a passage. Thin I remimbered that I must ha' made the miraculous reputation av that temple for the next fifty years. 'Not so fast,' I sez, an' I held out both my hands with a wink. That ould thief smiled like a father. I took him by the back av the neck in case he should be wishful to put a knife unto me unbeknownst, an' I ran him up and down the passage twice to collect his sensibilities. 'Be quiet,' sez he, in English. 'Now you talk sense,' I sez. 'F'what'll you give me for the use av that most iligant palanquin I have no time to take away?'—'Don't tell,' sez he. 'Is ut like?' sez I. 'But ye might give me my railway fare. I'm far from my home an' I've done you a service. Bhoys, 'tis a good thing to be a priest. The old man niver troubled himself to dhraw from a bank. As I will prove to you subsequint, he philandered all round the slack av his clothes an' began dribblin' ten-rupee notes, old gold mohurs, and rupees into my hand till I could hould no more."

"You lie!" said Ortheris. "You're mad or

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

sunstrook. A native don't give coin unless you cut it out o' 'im. 'Taint nature."

"Then my lie an' my sunstroke is concealed under that lump av sod yonder," retorted Mulvaney, unruffled, nodding across the scrub. "An' there's a dale more in nature than your squidgy little legs have iver taken you to, Orth'ris, me son. Four hundred an' thirty-four rupees by my reckonin', an' a big fat gold necklace that I took from him as a remimbrancer, was our share in that business."

"Ane 'e give it to you for love," said Ortheris.

"We were alone in that passage. Maybe I was a trifle too pressin', but considher fwhat I had done for the good av the temple, and the iverlasting joy av those women. 'Twas cheap at the price. I wud ha' taken more if I cud ha' found ut. I turned the ould man upside down at the last, but he was milked dhry. Thin he opened a door in another passage an' I found mysilf up to my knees in Benares river-water, an' bad smellin' ut is. More by token I had come out on the river-line close to the burnin' ghat and contagious to a cracklin' corpse. This was in the heart av the night, for I had been four hours in the temple. There was a crowd of boats tied up, so I tuk wan an' wint across the river. Thin I came home across country, lyin' up by day."

"How on earth did you manage?" I said.

"How did Sir Frederick Roberts get from Cabul to Candahar? He marched an' he niver

KRISHNA MULVANEY

tould how near he was to breakin' down. That's why he is fwhat he is. An' now" — Mulvaney yawned portentously. "Now I will go an' give myself up for absince widout leave. It's eight an' twenty days an' the rough end of the colonel's tongue in orderly room, any way you look at ut. But 'tis cheap at the price."

"Mulvaney," said I, softly. "If there happens to be any sort of excuse that the colonel can in any way accept, I have a notion that you'll get nothing more than the dressing-gown. The new recruits are in, and"—

"Not a word more, sorr. Is ut excuses the old man wants? 'Tis not my way, but he shall have thim. I'll tell him I was engaged in financial operations connected with a church," and he flapped his way to cantonments and the cells, singing lustily—

"So they sent a corp'ril's file,
And they put me in the gyard-room
For conduct unbecomin' of a soldier."

And when he was lost in the midst of the moonlight we could hear the refrain—

"Bang upon the big drum, bash upon the cymbals,
As we go marchin' along, boys, oh!
For although in this campaign
There's no whisky nor champagne,
We'll keep our spirits goin' with a song, boys!"

Therewith he surrendered himself to the joyful and almost weeping guard, and was made much of by his fellows. But to the colonel he said that he had been smitten with sunstroke and had

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

lain insensible on a villager's cot for untold hours; and between laughter and good-will the affair was smoothed over, so that he could, next day, teach the new recruits how to "Fear God, Honor the Queen, Shoot Straight, and Keep Clean."

THE NECKLACE

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE NECKLACE

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SHE was one of those charming girls, born by a freak of destiny in a family of toilers. She had no fortune, no expectations, no means of satisfying her ambitions, except by a marriage with a rich and distinguished man, and, as she knew none, in order to escape from her surroundings, she married a clerk in the office of the Minister of Public Instruction.

She dressed simply, because she had no means of adornment; but she was as unhappy as though she had fallen from a high social position, for the women who have neither caste nor race use their beauty, grace, and charm as stepping-stones to those heights from which they are otherwise barred, their natural tact and instinctive elegance and quick perceptions being their only inheritance, and, skilfully used, make them the equal of their more fortunate sisters. She suffered incessantly when she glanced around her humble home, and felt the absence of all those delicacies and luxuries which are enjoyed only by the rich. In short, all the little nothings, that another woman of her caste would not have seen, tor-

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

tured and wounded her. The sight of the old Breton peasant woman who performed her simple household duties awakened in her vain longings and troubled dreams.

She dreamed of beautiful halls, discreetly lighted by candles in great bronze candlesticks, whose rich carpets gave back no sounds and whose walls were covered with silks from the Orient, and of obsequious footmen half asleep in their large armchairs, ready to attend to your every want at a moment's notice; of large salons draped in ancient silks; of "étagers" covered with priceless bric-à-brac. She thought also of coquettish small salons, made expressly for the "five o'clock," when one receives only one's intimates or distinguished men of letters, from whom it is every woman's ambition to receive attentions.

When she was seated at the table (whose cloth had already done duty for three days) or opposite her husband—who evinced his entire satisfaction with the evening's repast by such exclamations as: "Oh, the good 'pot-au-feu'! I know nothing better!"—her imagination carried her away to stately banquet halls, whose walls were covered with rich tapestries, portraying scenes in which ancient personages and strange birds were pictured in the middle of a fairy-like forest. She pictured the glittering silver, strange dishes, exquisitely served on marvelous plate, and gallantries whispered and listened to with the

THE NECKLACE

sphinx-like smile with which a woman of the world knows so well how to conceal her emotions, all the while eating a rosy trout or dallying with a wing of a lark. She had no toilets, no jewels, and it was for these things that she longed, as the fleet Arabian longs for his native desert. What pleasure to have pleased, been envied, to be seductive and sought after!

She had a rich friend, a comrade from the convent, whom she no longer visited, because she suffered from seeing the things she could not have, and on returning wept whole days for grief, regret, despair, and distress.

One evening her husband came home radiant, holding in his hand a large envelope.

"See," said he, "here is something for you."

She nervously tore open the envelope, drew out a card, on which these words were printed:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Ramponeau beg the honor of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel for the evening of Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being wild with delight, as he had expected, she threw the invitation on the table, with an exclamation of disgust, saying sullenly:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be so pleased. You never go out, and this is an event. I only obtained it after infinite trouble. Everybody wants one; they are much sought after, and

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

they are not generally given to employees. You will see there all of the official world."

She looked at him with supreme disdain, and said impatiently:

"What would you like me to wear?" The secret was out. Manlike, he had not thought of that.

"But—the dress—that you wear to the theatre," stammered he. "You always look beautiful to me in that."

He stopped speaking, stupefied and dismayed on seeing his wife in tears. Two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks.

"What is the matter? What is the matter?" asked he tenderly. By violent effort she conquered her grief and calmly said, while wiping her humid cheeks:

"Nothing; only I have no toilet, and, of course, can not go. Give the card to one of your comrades whose wife is fortunate enough to have something suitable for the occasion."

Despairingly he said:

"See, Mathilde, how much will a dress cost to wear to this ball; one which can also be used for other occasions—something very simple."

She reflected a few moments, figuring in her own mind the sum she could ask without danger of immediate refusal and frightening her economical husband. Finally she hesitatingly said:

"I do not know exactly; but it seems to me I might manage with about 400 francs."

THE NECKLACE

He paled a little, because he had been saving just that sum to buy a gun for the following summer, when he would go with some of his friends to the plains of Nanterre on Sundays to shoot larks. Stifling his regrets, however, he replied:

"Very well, I will give you 400 francs, but try to have a beautiful dress."

The day of the fête drew near; but Madame Loisel seemed sad, anxious, and uneasy. Her toilet was ready, what could it be? Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? You have been so queer for the last few days!"

She replied: "It worries me that I have not one jewel, not a precious stone to wear. What a miserable figure I shall be! I think I would rather not go at all!"

"You can wear natural flowers; it is all the rage at this season, and for ten francs you can have two or three magnificent roses."

But she was not convinced.

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than to be poorly dressed among so many rich women."

"But how silly you are! Go to your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you her jewels. You are friendly enough with her to do that."

She gave a cry of joy.

"Yes; that is true—I had not thought of it."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

The following day she went to her friend and explained her predicament. Madame Forestier went to a closet and took out a large casket, and, opening it, said:

"Choose, my dear; they are at your service."

She saw first bracelets, then a necklace of pearls, a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones of exquisite workmanship. She tried them on before the glass, unable to decide whether to wear them or not.

"Have you nothing else?" said she.

"Oh, yes; look them over, I don't know what might please you."

Suddenly she opened a black satin case, disclosing to view a superb rivière of diamonds, her heart beat furiously with the desire of possession.

She took them in her trembling hands and put them on over her simple high-neck gown, and stood lost in an ecstasy of admiration of herself. Then, fearfully, hesitatingly, dreading the agony of a refusal:

"Can you lend me only that?"

"Why, certainly; if it pleases you."

She fell on her friend's neck, embraced her tempestuously, and then left hastily with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. Among all the beautiful women she was the most beautiful, elegant, gracious, and smiling with joy. She attracted the attention of

THE NECKLACE

some of the most distinguished men present, and on all sides was heard:

"Who is she?"

All the attachés of the cabinet sought her dancing card eagerly, and even the Minister himself expressed his approval. She danced with pleasure, thinking of nothing but the triumph of her beauty and the glory of her success. Intoxicated by all the admiration, she seemed to float through a cloud of happiness, intensified by her complete victory and the tribute paid to her charms, so sweet to the hearts of women. She left about four o'clock in the morning; her husband had slept since midnight in a small room, deserted except by two or three gentlemen who also awaited their wives.

He threw over her shoulders the modest cloak which she had brought, whose shabbiness seemed to mock the elegance of the ball toilet. She felt the incongruity, and walked swiftly away in order not to be seen by those whose rich furs were more in accordance with the occasion.

"Wait," said her husband, "you will take cold; I will call a carriage."

But she heeded him not, and rapidly descended the staircase. When they reached the street, there was no carriage in sight, and they were obliged to look for one, calling to the drivers who passed by, but in vain. Shiveringly they walked toward the Seine and finally found on the quay one of those nocturnal coupés one finds

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

only in Paris after dark, hovering about the great city like grim birds of prey, who conceal their misery during the day. It carried them to their door (Rue de Martyrs), and they slowly and sadly entered their small apartments. It was ended for her, and he only remembered that he would have to be at his desk at ten o'clock.

She took off her cloak in front of the glass in order to admire herself once more in all her bravery, but, suddenly, she cried out: "The diamonds are gone!" Her husband, almost half asleep, started at the cry and asked:

"What is the matter?"

She turned toward him with a frightened air.

"I—I have lost Madame Forestier's necklace!"

He rose dismayed.

"What—how! But it is not possible!" And they immediately began to search in the folds of the dress, the cloak, in the pockets—everywhere, and found nothing.

"Are you sure that you had it when you left the ball?"

"Yes; I felt it while still in the vestibule at the Minister's."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it drop. It ought to be in the carriage."

"Yes; it is possible. Did you take the number?"

"No; and you have not looked at it, either?"

"No."

THE NECKLACE

They looked at each other fearfully; finally Loisel dressed himself.

"I shall go over the whole ground that we traveled on foot, to see whether I can not find it."

He went out. She sat still in her brilliant ball toilet; no desire to sleep, no power to think, all swallowed up in the fear of the calamity which had fallen upon them.

Her husband came in at seven o'clock. He had found nothing. He had been to the Prefecture of the Police, to the papers offering a reward, to all small cab companies, anywhere, in short, where he could have the shadow of hope of recovery.

She waited all day in the same state of fear in the face of this frightful disaster.

Loisel returned in the evening pallid and haggard. No news as yet.

"You must write to your friend that you have broken the clasp of the necklace and are having it repaired. That will give us time to look around."

At the end of the week they had lost all hope, and Loisel, to whom it seemed this care and trouble had added five years to his age, said:

"We must try and replace the jewels."

The following day they went to the jeweler whose name was stamped inside the case. He consulted his books: "I did not sell that necklace, madame, I only furnished the case."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, racking their memories to find the same, both of them sick with grief and agony. At last, in a small shop in the Palais Royal, they found one which seemed to them like the one they had lost. With beating hearts they asked the price.

Forty thousand francs; but they could have it for 36,000 francs.

They asked the jeweler not to dispose of it for three days, and he also promised to take it back at 34,000 francs if the first one was found before the end of February.

Loisel had inherited 18,000 francs from his father. He borrowed the rest.

He borrowed a thousand francs from one, five hundred from another, five louis here, five louis there—he gave notes, made ruinous engagements, had recourse to the usurers, ran the whole gamut of money-lenders. He compromised his whole existence risking his signature, without knowing that it would be honored, terrified by the agony of the future, by the black misery which enveloped him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures. He went for the new necklace and deposited on the counter his 36,000 francs.

When Madame Loisel returned the necklace to Madame Forestier, she coldly said:

“You should have returned it sooner, as I might have needed it.”

She did not open the case, the one thing

THE NECKLACE

Madame Loisel had dreaded. What if she had discovered the change—what would she have thought? Would she not be taken for a thief?

From that time on Madame Loisel knew what life meant to the very poor in all its phases. She took her part heroically. This frightful debt must be paid. Her share of privations was bravely borne. They discharged their one domestic, changed their location, and rented smaller apartments near the roof.

She knew now what meant the duties of the household, the heavy work of the kitchen. Her pretty hands soon lost all semblance of the care of bygone days. She washed the soiled linen and dried it in her room. She went every morning to the street with the refuse of the kitchen, carrying the water, stopping at each flight of stairs to take breath—wearing the dress of the women of the people; she went each day to the grocer, the fruiterer, the butcher, carrying her basket on her arm, bargaining, defending cent by cent her miserable money.

They were obliged each month to pay some notes and renew others in order to gain time. Her husband worked in the evening balancing the books of merchants, and often was busy all night, copying at five cents a page.

And this life then endured for ten years.

At the end of this time they had paid all the tax of the usurers and compound interest.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Madame Loisel seemed an old woman now. She had become strong and hardy as the woman of the provinces, and with tousled head, short skirts, red hands, she was foremost among the loud-voiced women of the neighborhood, who passed their time gossiping at their doorsteps.

But sometimes when her husband was at his office she seated herself at the window and thought of that evening in the past and that ball, where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost the necklace? Who knows? Life is a singular and changeable thing, full of vicissitudes. How little it takes to save or wreck us!

One Sunday as she was walking in the Champs Elysées to divert herself from the cares and duties of the week she suddenly perceived a lady, with a little child, coming toward her. It was Madame Forestier, still young, beautiful and charming. Madame Loisel stopped short, too agitated to move. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that the necklace was paid for she would tell her everything. Why not?

She walked up to her and said: "Good day, Jeanne."

Madame Forestier did not recognize her and seemed astonished at being spoken to so familiarly by this woman of the people.

THE NECKLACE

"But—madame—I do not—I think you are mistaken."

"No; I am Mathilde Loisel."

"Oh!—my poor Mathilde, how you are changed!"

"Yes; I have had lots of trouble and misery since I last saw you—and all for you."

"For me! And how was that?"

"Do you remember the necklace of diamonds you lent me, to wear to the Minister's ball?"

"Yes; well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"Lost it! How could you, since you returned it to me?"

"I returned you one just like it, and for ten years we have been paying for it. You know, it was not easy for us, who had nothing—but it is finished, and I am very happy."

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine," said Madame Forestier.

"Yes; and you never found it out! They were so much alike," and she smiled proudly.

Touched to the heart, Madame Forestier took the poor, rough hands in hers, drawing her tenderly toward her, her voice filled with tears:

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine were false. They were not worth more than 500 francs at most."

THE SIGNAL.

BY VSEVOLOD MIKAILOVITCH GARSHIN



THE SIGNAL

BY VSEVOLOD MIKAILOVITCH GARSHIN

SEMEN IVANOV served as trackman on the railroad. His watch-house was twelve versts (nearly eight miles) distant from one station and ten from the other. The year before a large weaving mill had been established about four versts away; and its tall chimneys looked black from behind the trees of the wood; and nearer than this, apart from the other watch-houses, there was no human habitation.

Semen Ivanov was a sickly, broken-down man. Nine years before he had gone to the war: he served as orderly to an officer and had remained with him during the whole campaign. He starved and froze, and baked in the hot sun, and marched from forty to fifty versts in the frost or in the burning heat. It also happened that he was often under fire, but, thank God, no bullet ever touched him.

Once his regiment was in the first line; for a whole week the firing was kept up constantly on both sides: the Russian line on this side of the hollow and the Turkish lines just across, and from morning till night the firing was going on. Semen's officer was also in the front lines, and

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

three times a day, from the regiment kitchens in the hollow, Semen carried the hot samovar and the food. Semen walked through the open space while the bullets whistled over his head and cracked the stones. Semen was afraid, but he went on—wept, and went on. The officers were very much satisfied with Semen's services: the officers always had their hot tea.

Semen returned from the war without a wound, but with a rheumatic pain in his legs and arms. And he had suffered a good deal of sorrow since that time. His old father died soon after his return, then his little son—a boy of four—also died from some throat trouble; and Semen was left alone in the world with his wife.

Their work on the little piece of land allotted to them also proved unsuccessful, it being too hard for a man to till the soil with swollen arms and legs. And so they could not get along in their native village, and decided to go into new places in search of better luck. Semen lived with his wife on the Don for some time, and in the Government of Cherson; but they somehow could not get along very well anywhere. At last his wife went into service, and Semen continued his roving life as heretofore.

Once he happened to go by rail, and on one station he noticed the station-master, who seemed rather familiar to him. Semen looked at him intently, and the station-master also peered into Semen's face. They recognized each other: it

THE SIGNAL

was an officer of his regiment. "Is it you, Ivanov?" said the man.

"Yes, your honor, my very self."

"How did you get here?" And so Semen told him: such and such were the circumstances.

"Well, where are you going now?"

"I can not say, your honor."

"How is that, you fool, you can not say?"

"Just so, your honor, because I have nowhere to go to. I must look for some kind of employment, your honor."

And the station-master looked at him for a moment and fell to thinking, then he said to him: "Well, brother, stay here on the station in the mean time. But it seems to me that you are a married man? Where is your wife?"

"Yes, sir, I am married; my wife is serving at the house of a merchant at Kursk."

"Well, then, write for your wife to come here. I shall get a free ticket for her. We will soon have a vacant watch-house here, and I will ask the division-master to give you the place."

"Many thanks, your honor," replied Semen.

And so he remained on the station, helping in the station-master's kitchen, cutting wood, sweeping the courtyard and the railway platform. In two weeks his wife arrived, and Semen went on a hand-car to his new home.

The watch-house was new and warm, wood he had in plenty, the former watchman left a small garden, and there was a little less than one and

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

a half acres of arable land on the two sides of the railroad-bed. Semen was overjoyed: he began to dream of a little homestead of his own, and of buying a horse and a cow.

He was given all the necessary supplies: a green flag, a red flag, lanterns, a signal-pipe, a hammer, a rail-key for tightening the screw-nuts, a crowbar, shovel, brooms, clinch-nails, bolts, and two books with the rules and regulations of the railroad. At first Semen did not sleep at night, for he continually repeated the regulations. If the train was due in two hours, he had already gone his rounds, and would sit on the little bench at the watch-house and look and listen: were not the rails trembling, was there no noise of an approaching train?

At last he learned by heart all the rules; though he read with difficulty and had to spell out each word, nevertheless he did learn them by heart.

This happened in summer: the work was not hard, there was no snow to shovel, and, besides, the trains passed but rarely on that road. Semen would walk over his verst twice in twenty-four hours, would tighten a screw here and there, pick up a splinter, examine the water-pipes, and go home to take care of his little homestead. The only thing that bothered him and his wife was: no matter what they made up their minds to do, they had to ask the permission of the track-master, who again had to lay the matter before

THE SIGNAL

the division-master, and when permission was at last given the time had already passed, and it was then too late to be of any use to them. On account of this, Semen and his wife began, at times, to feel very lonely.

About two months passed in this way; Semen began to form acquaintance with his nearest neighbors—trackmen like himself. One was already a very old man, whom the railway authorities had long intended to replace; he could hardly move from his watch-house, and his wife attended to his duties. The other trackman, who lived nearer to the station, was still a young man, thin and sinewy. Semen met him for the first time on the railroad-bed half-way between their watch-houses, while they were making their rounds; Semen took off his cap and bowed. "Good health to you, neighbor," he said.

The neighbor looked at him askance. "How are you?" he replied, turned, and went his way.

The women also met afterward. Arina, Semen's wife, greeted her neighbor affably, but this neighbor, also not of the talkative kind, spoke a few words and walked away. On meeting her once, Semen asked:

"Why is your husband so uncommunicative, young woman?" After standing for some time in silence, she said: "But what should he talk to you about? Everybody has his troubles—God speed you."

But after another month had passed, their in-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

timacy grew. Now, when Semen and Vasili met on the road-bed, they sat down on the edge, smoked their pipes, and told each other of their past life and experiences. Vasili spoke but little, but Semen told of his campaign life and of his native village.

"I have seen plenty of sorrow in my time, and God knows I am not so very old either. God has not given us much luck. It just depends: the kind of a lot the dear Lord portions out to one—such he must have. This is the way I make it out, Vasili Stepanich, little brother."

And Vasili struck the bowl of his pipe on the rail to empty it, and said:

"It isn't luck nor fate which is eating your life and mine away, but people. There is not a beast more cruel and rapacious than man. A wolf does not devour a wolf—but man eats man alive."

"Well, brother, wolf does eat wolf—that is where you are wrong."

"It came to my tongue, so I said it; anyhow there is not a more cruel beast. If it were not for man's viciousness and greed—'twould be possible to live. Every one is on the lookout to grasp at your vitals, tear off a piece, and gobble it up."

"I don't know, brother," said Semen after thinking a bit. "Maybe it is so—but if it is really so, then the great God ordained it in this way."

THE SIGNAL

"And if it is so," spoke Vasili, "then there is no use of my speaking to you. A man who attributes to God every kind of iniquity, and himself sits and patiently bears it, can not be a man, brother mine—but an animal. Here you have my whole say!"

And he turned and went off without even saying good-by. Semen rose also and called after him: "Neighbor, and what are you abusing me for?"

But the neighbor did not even turn around, and went his way.

Semen looked after him till he was lost from sight at the turn of the road, then he returned home and said to his wife: "Well, Arina, what a venomous man that neighbor of ours is!"

Nevertheless they were not angry with each other; and when they met again they spoke as if nothing had happened and on the very same topic.

"Ei, brother, if not for the people—we would not sit here in these watch-houses," spoke Vasili.

"Well, what if we do live in a watch-house? It is not so bad to live in one, after all."

"Not so bad to live, not so bad—Ech, you! You lived long, but gained little; looked at much, but saw little. A poor man, no matter where he lives, in a railway watch-house or in any other place, what sort of a life is his? Those fleecers are eating your life away, squeeze all your juice out, and when you have grown old they throw

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

you out like some swill, for the pigs to feed on. How much wages do you get?"

"Well, not much, Vasili Stepanich, twelve rubles" (about seven dollars and a half).

"And I thirteen and a half. Allow me to ask you why! According to the rulings of the administration every one of us is supposed to get the same amount—fifteen rubles a month, and light and heat. Who was it that allotted you and me twelve, or say, thirteen and a half rubles? Allow me to ask you?— And you say it is not so bad a life? Understand me well, it is not about the three or one and a half rubles I am wrangling about—but even if they paid me the whole amount— Last month I was at the station when the director happened to pass. I saw him there. Had the honor. He occupied a whole private car by himself—on the station he alighted and stood on the platform, looking—no, I will not stay here long; I shall go where my eyes will lead me."

"But where will you go, Stepanich? Let well alone, you will not find it much better anywhere. You have a home here, warmth, and a bit of land. Your wife is an able workwoman—"

"Land! You ought to see the land I have— why, there isn't a stick on it. This spring I planted some cabbages. Well, one day the track-master passed: 'What is this?' he says. 'Why did you not report it? Why not have waited for permission? Dig it out at once and not a vestige

THE SIGNAL

should be left of it.' He was in his cups. At another time he would not have said a word, and here he got it into his head— Three rubles fine!—”

For some moments Vasili pulled at his pipe in silence, then he said in a low voice: “It wanted but little more, and I would have made short work of him.”

“Well, neighbor, you are a hot-head, I can tell you.”

“I am not hot, I am only speaking and considering everything from the point of justice. But he will get it from me yet, the red-mug; I shall make a complaint to the master of the division in person. We shall see!”

And he really complained.

Once the master of the division came to make a preliminary inspection of the road. In three days' time very important gentlemen were expected from St. Petersburg to make an inspection of the road: everything had to be made ship-shape; some new gravel was ordered before their arrival, added, leveled, and smoothed out, the sleepers were examined, the nuts tightened, the verst-posts newly painted, and the order was given that some fine yellow sand be strewn over the crossings. A track-woman even drove her old man out of the nearest watch-house, which he almost never left, in order to trim a little the tiny grass-plot. Semen worked a whole week to bring everything into first-rate order, even

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

mended his coat and burnished his brass shield till it shone. Vasili also worked hard.

At last the division master arrived in a buzzing draisine (hand car), worked by four men and making twenty versts an hour. It came flying toward Semen's watch-house, and Semen sprang forward and reported in military fashion. Everything appeared to be correct.

"Are you long here?" asked the master.

"Since the second of May, your honor."

"Very well, thank you. And who is at Number 164?"

The track-master who rode with him on the draisine replied: "Vasili Spiridov."

"Spiridov, Spiridov— Oh, the one you reported?"

"The very same."

"Very well, let us have a look at Vasili Spiridov. Go ahead."

The workmen leaned upon the handles and the draisine flew farther. "There will be a fight between them and the neighbor," thought Semen, looking after the disappearing draisine.

About two hours later Semen went on his rounds. He saw that some one was coming toward him, walking over the railroad bed, and there was something white visible on his head. Semen strained his eyes to see who it was—Vasili; in his hand he carried a stick and a small bundle was slung across his shoulders, and one cheek was tied up with a white kerchief.

THE SIGNAL

"Where are you going, neighbor?" Semen shouted to him.

When Vasili approached him closer, Semen saw that he was as pale as chalk and wild-eyed; and when he started to speak his voice broke.

"I am off to the city," he said, "to Moscow—to the main office of the administration."

"To the administration— Is that it! You are going to make a complaint, are you? Better not, Vasili Stepanich, forget it—"

"No brother, I will not forget it. It is too late to forget. You see, he struck me in the face, beat me till the blood flowed. As long as I live, I will not forget it, nor let it go at this."

"Give it up, Stepanich," Semen spoke to him, taking hold of his hand. "I speak truth: you will not make things better."

"Who speaks of better! I know myself that I will not make them better; you spoke truly about fate—you did. I shall not do much good to myself, but one has to stand up for justice."

"But won't you tell me how it all came about?"

"How it all came about— Well, he inspected everything, left the draisine on purpose to do so—even looked inside the watch-house. I knew beforehand that he would be strict—so I had everything in first-class order. He was already going to leave when I came forward with my complaint. He immediately burst forth: 'Here,'

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

he said, 'is to be a government inspection, you—so and so—and you dare come forward with your complaints about your vegetable garden! We are expecting privy councilors and he comes with his cabbages!' I could not control myself and said a word—not so very bad either, but it seemed to offend him and he struck me— And I stood there, as if it was the most usual thing in the world to happen. Only, when they went off, I came to my senses, washed off the blood from my face and went away."

"And what about the watch-house?"

"My wife is there, she will take care; and besides the devil take their road, anyway!"

"Good-by, Ivanich," he said to Semen on taking leave of him; I don't know if I shall find justice for myself."

"You don't mean to tell me that you will go on foot?"

"I shall ask them at the station to let me ride in a freighter; to-morrow I shall be in Moscow."

The neighbors took leave of each other and each went his way. Vasili stayed away for a long time. His wife did all the work for him, sleeping neither night nor day, and looked very worn and exhausted. On the third day the inspectors passed: an engine, freight-car, and two private cars, and Vasili was still absent. On the fourth day Semen saw Vasili's wife; her face was swollen with incessant weeping and her eyes were very red. "Has your husband returned?"

THE SIGNAL

he asked her. She only waved her arm, but did not utter a word.

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When still a little boy Semen had learned how to make willow pipes. He burnt out the pith, drilled out where necessary the tiny finger-holes, and finished up the end of the pipe so artistically that almost anything could be played on it. At odd moments he now made lots of such pipes and sent them with an acquaintance of his, a freight conductor, to the city, where they were sold at two copecks¹ a pipe. On the third day after the inspection he left his wife at home to meet the six o'clock train, took his knife and went into the woods to cut his willow sticks. He came to the end of his section, where the road made a sharp turn, descended the embankment and went up the hill. About a half verst farther was a large bog, around which grew splendid shrubs for his pipes. He cut a whole heap of sticks and went home, again walking through the wood. The sun was already low; and a deathlike quiet reigned all about, only the chirping of the birds could be heard and the crackling underfoot of the wind-fallen wood. A little more and he would reach the railroad bed; suddenly it seemed to him as if he heard coming from somewhere the clang of iron striking on iron. Semen hurried his steps. "What can it be?" he asked him-

¹ A copeck is a little more than half a cent. 100 copecks make a silver ruble, or 60 cents.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

self, knowing that no repairs were going on in that section at that time. He reached the edge of the wood—before him rose high the embankment of the railway; and he saw on the top—on the railroad bed—a man squatting down at work on something. Semen began to ascend the embankment very quietly, thinking that some one was trying to steal the screw-nuts. He saw the man rise; in his hand he held a crowbar; he quickly shoved the crowbar under the rail and gave it a push to one side—Semen felt everything grow dim; he tried to shout, but could not. He saw that it was Vasili, and made a dash for the embankment, but Vasili was already rolling down the other side of the embankment with the rail-key and crowbar.

“Vasili Stepanich! Little father, friend, come back! Give me the crowbar! Let us put the rail in place; no one will ever know. Come back, save your soul from a great sin!”

But Vasili did not even turn round, and went on into the woods.

Semen remained standing over the dislocated rail, his sticks lying in a heap at his feet. The train which was due was not a freighter, but a passenger train, and he had nothing to stop it with: a flag he had none. He could not put the rail into its right place; with bare hands one can not fasten in the rail spikes. He had to run, run for dear life into his watch-house for the necessary implements! God give him strength!

THE SIGNAL

And Semen started to run breathlessly toward his watch-house. He ran—now, now he would fall—at last he left the wood behind, he had only about seven hundred feet left to his watch-house—suddenly he heard the factory whistle. Six o'clock, and at two minutes past six the train would pass. Great God! Save the innocent souls! And before his eyes he seemed to see how the left wheel of the engine would strike the cut rail, quiver, slant to one side, and tear the sleepers, knock them all to slivers, and just here—is the rounded curve, and the embankment—and the engine, the cars, all—would go pell-mell down, down from the height of seventy-seven feet, and the third-class cars were jammed full of people, little children among them. Now they were sitting tranquilly, not thinking of anything. O Lord, teach him what to do! No, he would not be able to get to the watch-house and return in time.

Semen gave up his intention of running to the watch-house, turned and ran back quicker than he had come, his head in a whirl; not knowing himself what would happen he ran up to the cut rail: his sticks lay scattered all around. He bent down and took one of the sticks, not understanding himself why he did it; and ran farther. And it seemed to him that the train was already approaching. He heard a far-away whistle, heard the rails begin to quiver measuredly and quietly: he had no more strength left to run. He stopped

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

about seven hundred feet from the fatal spot: suddenly he became illuminated, as it were, by a thought.

He took off his hat, took from it a handkerchief; took out his knife from his boot-leg and crossed himself. God's blessing!

He slashed his left arm a little above the elbow with his sharp knife; the blood spurted down in a hot stream; he dipped his handkerchief in it, smoothed it out, tied it to his stick, and displayed his red flag.

He stood waving the flag; the train was already in sight. The engineer did not see him, he would come nearer, but at a distance of seven hundred feet he would not be able to stop the heavy train!

And the blood was pouring and pouring—Semen pressed his hand to his side, but the blood would not stop; evidently he had made too deep a cut into the arm; his head was beginning to turn; he was getting dizzy, as if black flies were swimming in his eyes; then everything became altogether dark, and loud bells were ringing in his ears— He no longer saw the train, no longer heard the noise: only one thought predominated: "I will not be able to keep on my feet, will fall down, drop the flag; the train will pass over me?—Dear God, succor, send some one to relieve me—" His soul became a void, and he dropped the flag. But the bloody flag did not fall to the ground: some one's hand caught it and raised it

THE SIGNAL

aloft in front of the oncoming train. The engineer saw him and brought the engine to a stop.

The people came rushing from the train; soon they gathered into a crowd; before them lay a man, unconscious, covered with blood; another man stood beside him with a bloody rag tied to a stick.

Vasili surveyed the crowd and lowered his head.

"Bind me," he said; "it was I who cut the rail."



PUTOIS

BY ANATOLE FRANCE



*Dedicated to
Georges Brandes*

PUTOIS

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

I

THIS garden of our childhood, said Monsieur Bergeret, this garden that one could pace off in twenty steps, was for us a whole world, full of smiles and surprises.

"Lucien, do you recall Putois?" asked Zoe, smiling as usual, the lips pressed, bending over her work.

"Do I recall Putois! Of all the faces I saw as a child that of Putois remains the clearest in my remembrance. All the features of his face and his character are fixed in my mind. He had a pointed cranium . . ."

"A low forehead," added Mademoiselle Zoe.

And the brother and sister recited alternately, in a monotonous voice, with an odd gravity, the points in a sort of description:

"A low forehead."

"Squinting eyes."

"A shifty glance."

"Crow's-feet at the temples."

"The cheek-bones sharp, red and shining."

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"His ears had no rims to them."

"The features were devoid of all expression."

"His hands, which were never still, alone expressed his meaning."

"Thin, somewhat bent, feeble in appearance . . ."

"In reality he was unusually strong."

"He easily bent a five-franc piece between the first finger and the thumb . . ."

"Which was enormous."

"His voice was drawling . . ."

"And his speech mild."

Suddenly Monsieur Bergeret exclaimed: "Zoe! we have forgotten 'Yellow hair and sparse beard.' Let us begin all over again."

Pauline, who had listened with astonishment to this strange recital, asked her father and aunt how they had been able to learn by heart this bit of prose, and why they recited it as if it were a litany.

Monsieur Bergeret gravely answered:

"Pauline, what you have heard is a text, I may say a liturgy, used by the Bergeret family. It should be handed down to you so that it may not perish with your aunt and me. Your grandfather, my daughter, your grandfather, Eloi Bergeret, who was not amused with trifles, thought highly of this bit, principally because of its origin. He called it 'The Anatomy of Putois.' And he used to say that he preferred, in certain respects, the anatomy of Putois to the anatomy

PUTOIS

of Quaresmeprenant. 'If the description by Xenomanes,' he said, 'is more learned and richer in unusual and choice expressions, the description of Putois greatly surpasses it in clarity and simplicity of style.' He held this opinion because Doctor Ledouble, of Tours, had not yet explained chapters thirty, thirty-one, and thirty-two of the fourth book of Rabelais."

"I do not understand at all," said Pauline.

"That is because you did not know Putois, my daughter. You must understand that Putois was the most familiar figure in my childhood and in that of your Aunt Zoe. In the house of your grandfather Bergeret we constantly spoke of Putois. Each believed that he had seen him."

Pauline asked:

"Who was this Putois?"

Instead of replying, Monsieur Bergeret commenced to laugh, and Mademoiselle Bergeret also laughed, her lips pressed tight together. Pauline looked from one to the other. She thought it strange that her aunt should laugh so heartily, and more strange that she should laugh with and in sympathy with her brother. It was indeed singular, as the brother and sister were quite different in character.

"Papa, tell me what was Putois? Since you wish me to know, tell me."

"Putois, my daughter, was a gardener. The son of honest market-gardeners, he set up for himself as nurseryman at Saint-Omer. But he

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

did not satisfy his customers and got in a bad way. Having given up business, he went out by the day. Those who employed him could not always congratulate themselves."

At this, Mademoiselle Bergeret, laughing, rejoined:

"Do you recall, Lucien, when our father could not find his ink, his pens, his sealing-wax, his scissors, he said: 'I suspect Putois has been here'?"

"Ah!" said Monsieur Bergeret, "Putois had not a good reputation."

"Is that all?" asked Pauline.

"No, my daughter, it is not all. Putois was remarkable in this, that while we knew him and were familiar with him, nevertheless—"

"—He did not exist," said Zoe.

Monsieur Bergeret looked at his sister with an air of reproach.

"What a speech, Zoe! and why break the charm like that? Do you dare say it, Zoe? Zoe, can you prove it? To maintain that Putois did not exist, that Putois never was, have you sufficiently considered the conditions of existence and the modes of being? Putois existed, my sister. But it is true that his was a peculiar existence."

"I understand less and less," said Pauline, discouraged.

"The truth will be clear to you presently, my daughter. Know then that Putois was born fully grown. I was still a child and your aunt was a little girl. We lived in a little house, in a suburb

PUTOIS

of Saint-Omer. Our parents led a peaceful, retired life, until they were discovered by an old lady named Madame Cornouiller, who lived at the manor of Montplaisir, twelve miles from town, and proved to be a great-aunt of my mother's. By right of relationship she insisted that our father and mother come to dine every Sunday at Montplaisir, where they were excessively bored. She said that it was the proper thing to have a family dinner on Sunday and that only people of common origin failed to observe this ancient custom. My father was bored to the point of tears at Montplaisir. His desperation was painful to contemplate. But Madame Cornouiller did not notice it. She saw nothing. My mother was braver. She suffered as much as my father, and perhaps more, but she smiled."

"Women are made to suffer," said Zoe.

"Zoe, every living thing is destined to suffer. In vain our parents refused these fatal invitations. Madame Cornouiller came to take them each Sunday afternoon. They had to go to Montplaisir; it was an obligation from which there was absolutely no escape. It was an established order that only a revolt could break. My father finally revolted and swore not to accept another invitation from Madame Cornouiller, leaving it to my mother to find decent pretexts and varied reasons for these refusals, for which she was the least capable. Our mother did not know how to pretend."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Say, Lucien, that she did not like to. She could tell a fib as well as any one."

"It is true that when she had good reasons she gave them rather than invent poor ones. Do you recall, my sister, that one day she said at table: 'Fortunately, Zoe has the whooping-cough; we shall not have to go to Montplaisir for some time'?"

"That was true!" said Zoe.

"You got over it, Zoe. And one day Madame Cornouiller said to my mother: 'Dearest, I count on your coming with your husband to dine Sunday at Montplaisir.' Our mother, expressly bidden by her husband to give Madame Cornouiller a good reason for declining, invented, in this extremity, a reason that was not the truth. 'I am extremely sorry, dear Madame, but that will be impossible for us. Sunday I expect the gardener.'

"On hearing this, Madame Cornouiller looked through the glass door of the salon at the little wild garden, where the prickwood and the lilies looked as though they had never known the pruning-knife and were likely never to know it. 'You expect the gardener! What for?'

"'To work in the garden.'

And my mother, having involuntarily turned her eyes on this little square of weeds and plants run wild, that she had called a garden, recognized with dismay the improbability of her excuse.

"'This man,' said Madame Cornouiller, 'could just as well work in your garden Monday or

PUTOIS

Tuesday. Moreover, that will be much better. One should not work on Sunday.'

" 'He works all the week.'

"I have often noticed that the most absurd and ridiculous reasons are the least disputed: they disconcert the adversary. Madame Cornouiller insisted, less than one might expect of a person so little disposed to give up. Rising from her armchair, she asked:

" 'What do you call your gardener, dearest?'

" 'Putois,' answered my mother without hesitation.

"Putois was named. From that time he existed. Madame Cornouiller took herself off, murmuring: 'Putois! It seems to me that I know that name. Putois! Putois! I must know him. But I do not recollect him. Where does he live?'

" 'He works by the day. When one wants him one leaves word with this one or that one.'

" 'Ah! I thought so, a loafer and a vagabond—a good-for-nothing. Don't trust him, dearest.'

"From that time Putois had a character."

II

Messieurs Goubin and Jean Marteau having arrived, Monsieur Bergeret put them in touch with the conversation.

"We were speaking of him whom my mother caused to be born gardener at Saint-Omer and

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

whom she christened. He existed from that time on."

"Dear master, will you kindly repeat that?" said Monsieur Goubin, wiping the glass of his monocle.

"Willingly," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "There was no gardener. The gardener did not exist. My mother said: 'I am waiting for the gardener.' At once the gardener was. He lived."

"Dear master," said Monsieur Goubin, "how could he live since he did not exist?"

"He had a sort of existence," replied Monsieur Bergeret.

"You mean an imaginary existence," Monsieur Goubin replied, disdainfully.

"Is it nothing then, but an imaginary existence?" exclaimed the master. "And have not mythical beings the power to influence men? Consider mythology, Monsieur Goubin, and you will perceive that they are not real beings but imaginary beings that exercise the most profound and lasting influence on the mind. Everywhere and always, beings who have no more reality than Putois have inspired nations with hatred and love, terror and hope, have advised crimes, received offerings, made laws and customs. Monsieur Goubin, think of the eternal mythology. Putois is a mythical personage, the most obscure, I grant you, and of the lowest order. The coarse satyr, who in olden times sat at the table with our peasants in the North, was

PUTOIS

considered worthy of appearing in a picture by Jordaens and a fable by La Fontaine. The hairy son of Sycorax appeared in the noble world of Shakespeare. Putois, less fortunate, will be always neglected by artists and poets. He lacks bigness and the unusual style and character. He was conceived by minds too reasonable, among people who knew how to read and write, and who had not that delightful imagination in which fables take root. I think, Messieurs, that I have said enough to show you the real nature of Putois."

"I understand it," said Monsieur Goubin. And Monsieur Bergeret continued his discourse.

"Putois was. I can affirm it. He was. Consider it, gentlemen, and you will admit that a state of being by no means implies substance, and means only the bonds attributed to the subject, expresses only a relation."

"Undoubtedly," said Jean Marteau; "but a being without attributes is a being less than nothing. I do not remember who at one time said, 'I am that I am.' Pardon my lapse of memory. One cannot remember everything. But the unknown who spoke in that fashion was very imprudent. In letting it be understood by this thoughtless observation that he was deprived of attributes and denied all relations, he proclaimed that he did not exist and thoughtlessly suppressed himself. I wager that no one has heard of him since." —"You have lost," answered Monsieur Bergeret.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"He corrected the bad effect of these egotistical expressions by employing quantities of adjectives, and he is often spoken of, most often without judgment."—"I do not understand," said Monsieur Goubin.—"It is not necessary to understand," replied Jean Marteau. And he begged Monsieur Bergeret to speak of Putois.—"It is very kind of you to ask me," said the master.—"Putois was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, at Saint-Omer. He would have been better off if he had been born some centuries before in the forest of Arden or in the forest of Brocéliande. He would then have been a remarkably clever evil spirit."—"A cup of tea, Monsieur Goubin," said Pauline.—"Was Putois, then, an evil spirit?" said Jean Marteau.—"He was evil," replied Monsieur Bergeret; "he was, in a way, but not absolutely. It was true of him as with those devils that are called wicked, but in whom one discovers good qualities when one associates with them. And I am disposed to think that injustice has been done Putois. Madame Cornouiller, who, warned against him, had at once suspected him of being a loafer, a drunkard, and a robber, reflected that since my mother, who was not rich, employed him, it was because he was satisfied with little, and asked herself if she would not do well to have him work instead of her gardener, who had a better reputation, but expected more. The time had come for trimming the yews. She thought that if Madame Eloi

PUTOIS

Bergeret, who was poor, did not pay Putois much, she herself, who was rich, would give him still less, for it is customary for the rich to pay less than the poor. And she already saw her yews trimmed in straight hedges, in balls and in pyramids, without her having to pay much. 'I will keep an eye open,' she said, 'to see that Putois does not loaf or rob me. I risk nothing, and it will be all profit. These vagabonds sometimes do better work than honest laborers.' She resolved to make a trial, and said to my mother: 'Dearest, send me Putois. I will set him to work at Montplaisir.' My mother would have done so willingly. But really it was impossible. Madame Cornouiller waited for Putois at Montplaisir, and waited in vain. She followed up her ideas and did not abandon her plans. When she saw my mother again, she complained of not having any news of Putois. 'Dearest, didn't you tell him that I was expecting him?'—'Yes! but he is strange, odd.'—'Oh, I know that kind. I know your Putois by heart. But there is no workman so crazy as to refuse to come to work at Montplaisir. My house is known, I think. Putois must obey my orders, and quickly, dearest. It will be sufficient to tell me where he lives; I will go and find him myself.' My mother answered that she did not know where Putois lived, that no one knew his house, that he was without hearth or home. 'I have not seen him again, Madame. I believe he is hiding.' What better could she say?

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Madame Cornouiller heard her distrustfully; she suspected her of misleading, of removing Putois from inquiry, for fear of losing him or making him ask more. And she thought her too selfish. Many judgments accepted by the world that history has sanctioned are as well founded as that.” —“That is true,” said Pauline.—“What is true?” asked Zoe, half asleep.—“That the judgments of history are often false. I remember, papa, that you said one day: ‘Madame Roland was very ingenuous to appeal to the impartiality of posterity, and not perceive that, if her contemporaries were ill-natured monkeys, their posterity would be also composed of ill-natured monkeys.’” —“Pauline,” said Mademoiselle Zoe severely, “what connection is there between the story of Putois and this that you are telling us?” —“A very great one, my aunt.” —“I do not grasp it.” —Monsieur Bergeret, who was not opposed to digressions, answered his daughter: “If all injustices were finally redressed in the world, one would never have imagined another for these adjustments. How do you expect posterity to pass righteous judgment on the dead? How question them in the shades to which they have taken flight? As soon as we are able to be just to them we forget them. But can one ever be just? And what is justice? Madame Cornouiller, at least, was finally obliged to recognize that my mother had not deceived her and that Putois was not to be found. However, she did not give up

PUTOIS

trying to find him. She asked all her relatives, friends, neighbors, servants, and tradesmen if they knew Putois. Only two or three answered that they had never heard of him. For the most part they believed they had seen him. 'I have heard that name,' said the cook, 'but I cannot recall his face.'—'Putois! I must know him,' said the street-sweeper, scratching his ear. 'But I cannot tell you who it is.' The most precise description came from Monsieur Blaise, receiver of taxes, who said that he had employed Putois to cut wood in his yard, from the 19th to the 28d of October, the year of the comet. One morning, Madame Cornouiller, out of breath, dropped into my father's office. 'I have seen Putois. Ah! I have seen him.'—'You believe it?'—'I am sure. He was passing close by Monsieur Tenchant's wall. Then he turned into the Rue des Abbesses, walking quickly. I lost him.'—'Was it really he?'—'Without a doubt. A man of fifty, thin, bent, the air of a vagabond, a dirty blouse.'—'It is true,' said my father, 'that this description could apply to Putois.'—'You see! Besides, I called him. I cried: "Putois!" and he turned around.'—'That is the method,' said my father, 'that they employ to assure themselves of the identity of evil-doers that they are hunting for.'—'I told you that it was he! I know how to find him, your Putois. Very well! He has a bad face. You had been very careless, you and your wife, to employ him. I understand physiognomy, and though I

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

only saw his back, I could swear that he is a robber, and perhaps an assassin. The rims of his ears are flat, and that is a sign that never fails.'—'Ah! you noticed that the rims of his ears were flat?'—'Nothing escapes me. My dear Monsieur Bergeret, if you do not wish to be assassinated with your wife and your children, do not let Putois come into your house again. Take my advice: have all your locks changed.'—Well, a few days afterward, it happened that Madame Cornouiller had three melons stolen from her vegetable garden. The robber not having been found, she suspected Putois. The gendarmes were called to Montplaisir, and their report confirmed the suspicions of Madame Cornouiller. Bands of marauders were ravaging the gardens of the countryside. But this time the robbery seemed to have been committed by one man, and with singular dexterity. No trace of anything broken, no footprints in the damp earth. The robber could be no one but Putois. That was the opinion of the corporal, who knew all about Putois, and had tried hard to put his hand on that bird. The 'Journal of Saint-Omer' devoted an article to the three melons of Madame Cornouiller, and published a portrait of Putois from descriptions furnished by the town. 'He has,' said the paper, 'a low forehead, squinting eyes, a shifty glance, crow's-feet, sharp cheek-bones, red and shining. No rims to the ears. Thin, somewhat bent, feeble in appearance, in reality he is unusually strong.

PUTOIS

He easily bends a five-franc piece between the first finger and the thumb.' There were good reasons for attributing to him a long series of robberies committed with surprising dexterity. The whole town was talking of Putois. One day it was learned that he had been arrested and locked up in prison. But it was soon recognized that the man that had been taken for him was an almanac seller named Rigobert. As no charge could be brought against him, he was discharged after fourteen months of detention on suspicion. And Putois remained undiscoverable. Madame Cornouiller was the victim of another robbery, more audacious than the first. Three small silver spoons were taken from her sideboard. She recognized in this the hand of Putois, had a chain put on the door of her bedroom, and was unable to sleep." . . .

About ten o'clock in the evening, Pauline having gone to her room, Mademoiselle Bergeret said to her brother: "Do not forget to relate how Putois betrayed Madame Cornouiller's cook."—"I was thinking of it, my sister," answered Monsieur Bergeret. "To omit it would be to lose the best of the story. But everything must be done in order. Putois was carefully searched for by the police, who could not find him. When it was known that he could not be found, each one considered it his duty to find him; the shrewd ones succeeded. And as there were many shrewd ones at Saint-Omer and in the suburbs, Putois was

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

seen simultaneously in the streets, in the fields, and in the woods. Another trait was thus added to his character. He was accorded the gift of ubiquity, the attribute of many popular heroes. A being capable of leaping long distances in a moment, and suddenly showing himself at the place where he was least expected, was honestly frightening. Putois was the terror of Saint-Omer. Madame Cornouiller, convinced that Putois had stolen from her three melons and three little spoons, lived in a state of fear, barricaded at Montplaisir. Bolts, bars, and locks did not reassure her. Putois was for her a frightfully subtle being who could pass through doors. Trouble with her servants redoubled her fear. Her cook having been betrayed, the time came when she could no longer hide her misfortune. But she obstinately refused to name her betrayer."—"Her name was Gudule," said Mademoiselle Zoe.—"Her name was Gudule, and she believed that she was protected from danger by a long, forked beard that she wore on her chin. The sudden appearance of a beard protected the innocence of that holy daughter of the king that Prague venerates. A beard, no longer youthful, did not suffice to protect the virtue of Gudule. Madame Cornouiller urged Gudule to tell her the man. Gudule burst into tears, but kept silent. Prayers and menaces had no effect. Madame Cornouiller made a long and circumstantial inquiry. She adroitly questioned her neighbors and

PUTOIS

tradespeople, the gardener, the street-sweeper, the gendarmes; nothing put her on the track of the culprit. She tried again to obtain from Gudule a complete confession. 'In your own interest, Gudule, tell me who it is.' Gudule remained mute. All at once a ray of light flashed through the mind of Madame Cornouiller: 'It is Putois!' The cook cried, but did not answer. 'It is Putois! Why did I not guess it sooner? It is Putois! Miserable! miserable! miserable!' and Madame Cornouiller remained convinced that it was Putois. Everybody at Saint-Omer, from the judge to the lamplighter's dog, knew Gudule and her basket. At the news that Putois had betrayed Gudule, the town was filled with surprise, wonder, and merriment. . . . With this reputation in the town and its environs he remained attached to our house by a thousand subtle ties. He passed before our door, and it was believed that he sometimes climbed the wall of our garden. He was never seen face to face. At any moment we would recognize his shadow, his voice, his footsteps. More than once we thought we saw his back in the twilight, at the corner of a road. To my sister and me he gradually changed in character. He remained mischievous and malevolent, but he became childlike and very ingenuous. He became less real and, I dare say, more poetical. He entered in the artless cycle of childish traditions. He became more like Croquemitaine,¹

¹ The national "bugaboo" or "bogey man."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

like Père Fouettard, or the sand man who closes the children's eyes when evening comes. It was not that imp that tangled the colts' tails at night in the stable. Less rustic and less charming, but equally and frankly roguish, he made ink mustaches on my sister's dolls. In our bed, before going to sleep, we listened; he cried on the roofs with the cats, he howled with the dogs, he filled the mill hopper with groans, and imitated the songs of belated drunkards in the streets. What made Putois ever-present and familiar to us, what interested us in him, was that the remembrance of him was associated with all the objects about us. Zoe's dolls, my school books, in which he had many times rumpled and besmeared the pages; the garden wall, over which we had seen his red eyes gleam in the shadow; the blue porcelain jar that he cracked one winter's night, unless it was the frost; the trees, the streets, the benches—everything recalled Putois, the children's Putois, a local and mythical being. He did not equal in grace and poetry the dullest satyr, the stoutest fawn of Sicily or Thessaly. But he was still a demigod. He had quite a different character for our father; he was symbolical and philosophical. Our father had great compassion for men. He did not think them altogether rational; their mistakes, when they were not cruel, amused him and made him smile. The belief in Putois interested him as an epitome and a summary of all human beliefs. As he was ironical

PUTOIS

and a joker, he spoke of Putois as if he were a real being. He spoke with so much insistence sometimes, and detailed the circumstances with such exactness, that my mother was quite surprised and said to him in her open-hearted way: 'One would say that you spoke seriously, my friend: you know well, however . . .' He replied gravely: 'All Saint-Omer believes in the existence of Putois. Would I be a good citizen if I deny him? One should look twice before setting aside an article of common faith.' Only a perfectly honest soul has such scruples. At heart my father was a Gassendiste.² He keyed his own particular sentiment with the public sentiment, believing, like the countryside, in the existence of Putois, but not admitting his direct responsibility for the theft of the melons and the betrayal of the cook. Finally, he professed faith in the existence of a Putois, to be a good citizen; and he eliminated Putois in his explanations of the events that took place in the town. By doing so in this instance, as in all others, he was an honorable and a sensible man.

"As for our mother, she reproached herself somewhat for the birth of Putois, and not without reason. Because, after all, Putois was the child of our mother's invention, as Caliban was the poet's invention. Without doubt the faults were not equal, and my mother was more innocent than Shakespeare. However, she was fright-

² A follower of Gassendi (d. 1655), an exponent of Epicurus.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ened and confused to see her little falsehood grow inordinately, and her slight imposture achieve such a prodigious success, that, without stopping, extended all over town and threatened to extend over the world. One day she even turned pale, believing that she would see her falsehood rise up before her. That day, a servant she had, new to the house and the town, came to say to her that a man wished to see her. He wished to speak to Madame. 'What man is it?'—'A man in a blouse. He looks like a laborer.'—'Did he give his name?'—'Yes, Madame.'—'Well! what is his name?'—'Putois.'—'He told you that was his name?'—'Putois, yes, Madame.'—'He is here?'—'Yes, Madame. He is waiting in the kitchen.'—'You saw him?'—'Yes, Madame.'—'What does he want?'—'He did not say. He will only tell Madame.'—'Go ask him.'

"When the servant returned to the kitchen Putois was gone. This meeting of the new servant with Putois was never cleared up. But from that day I think my mother commenced to believe that Putois might well exist and that she had not told a falsehood after all."

THE COURTING OF T'NOW- HEAD'S BELL

BY JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE



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FOR two years it had been notorious in the square that Sam'l Dickie was thinking of courting T'nowhead's Bell, and that if little Sanders Elshioner (which is the Thrums pronunciation of Alexander Alexander) went in for her, he might prove a formidable rival. Sam'l was a weaver in the Tenements, and Sanders a coal-carter whose trade-mark was a bell on his horse's neck that told when coals were coming. Being something of a public man, Sanders had not, perhaps, so high a social position as Sam'l, but he had succeeded his father on the coal-cart, while the weaver had already tried several trades. It had always been against Sam'l, too, that once when the kirk was vacant he had advised the selection of the third minister who preached for it, on the ground that it came expensive to pay a large number of candidates. The scandal of the thing was hushed up, out of respect for his father, who was a God-fearing man, but Sam'l was known by it in Lang Tammass's circle. The coal-carter was called Little Sanders, to distinguish him from his father, who was not much more than half his size. He had grown up with the name,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

and its inapplicability now came home to nobody. Sam'l's mother had been more far-seeing than Sanders'. Her man had been called Sammy all his life, because it was the name he got as a boy, so when their eldest son was born she spoke of him as Sam'l while still in his cradle. The neighbors imitated her, and thus the young man had a better start in life than had been granted to Sammy, his father.

It was Saturday evening — the night in the week when Auld Licht young men fell in love. Sam'l Dickie, wearing a blue Glengarry bonnet with a red ball on the top, came to the door of a one-story house in the Tenements, and stood there wriggling, for he was in a suit of tweed for the first time that week, and did not feel at one with them. When his feeling of being a stranger to himself wore off, he looked up and down the road, which straggles between houses and gardens, and then, picking his way over the puddles, crossed to his father's hen-house and sat down on it. He was now on his way to the square.

Eppie Fargus was sitting on an adjoining dike, knitting stockings, and Sam'l looked at her for a time.

"Is't yersel', Eppie?" he said at last.

"It's a' that," said Eppie.

"Hoo's a' wi' ye?" asked Sam'l.

"We're juist aff an' on," replied Eppie, cautiously.

There was not much more to say, but as Sam'l

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

sidled off the hen-house, he murmured politely: "Ay, ay." In another minute he would have been fairly started, but Eppie resumed the conversation.

"Sam'l," she said, with a twinkle in her eye, "ye can tell Lisbeth Fergus I'll likely be drappin' in on her aboot Munday or Teisday."

Lisbeth was sister to Eppie, and wife of Tammas McQuhatty, better known as T'nowhead, which was the name of his farm. She was thus Bell's mistress.

Sam'l leaned against the hen-house, as if all his desire to depart had gone.

"Hoo'd 'ye kin I'll be at the T'nowhead the nicht?" he asked, grinning in anticipation.

"Ou, I'se warrant ye'll be after Bell," said Eppie.

"A'm no sae sure o' that," said Sam'l, trying to leer. He was enjoying himself now.

"A'm no sure o' that," he repeated, for Eppie seemed lost in stitches.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay."

"Ye'll be speirin' her sune noo, I dinna doot?"

This took Sam'l, who had only been courting Bell for a year or two, a little aback.

"Hoo d'ye mean, Eppie?" he asked.

"Maybe ye'll do't the nicht?"

"Na, there's nae hurry," said Sam'l.

"Weel, we're a' coontin' on't, Sam'l."

"Gae wa wi' ye."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"What for no?"

"Gae wa wi' ye," said Sam'l again.

"Bell's gei an' fond o' ye, Sam'l."

"Ay," said Sam'l.

"But am dootin' ye're a fellbilly wi' the lasses."

"Ay, oh, I d'na kin, moderate, moderate," said Sam'l, in high delight.

"I saw ye," said Eppie, speaking with a wire in her mouth, "gaen on terr'ble wi' Mysy Haggart at the pump last Saturday."

"We was juist amoosin' oorsels," said Sam'l.

"It'll be nae amoosement to Mysy," said Eppie, "gin ye brak her heart."

"Losh, Eppie," said Sam'l, "I didna think o' that."

"Ye maun kin weel, Sam'l, 'at there's mony a lass wid jump at ye."

"Ou, weel," said Sam'l, implying that a man must take these things as they come.

"For ye're a dainty chield to look at, Sam'l."

"Do ye think so, Eppie? Ay, ay; oh, I d'na kin A'm anything by the ordinar."

"Ye mayna be," said Eppie, "but lasses doesna do to be ower partikler."

Sam'l resented this, and prepared to depart again.

"Ye'll no tell Bell that?" he asked, anxiously.

"Tell her what?"

"Aboot me an' Mysy."

"We'll see hoo ye behave yerself, Sam'l."

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

"No 'at I care, Eppie; ye can tell her gin ye like. I widna think twice o' tellin' her mysel'."

"The Lord forgie ye for leein', Sam'l," said Eppie, as he disappeared down Tammy Tosh's close. Here he came upon Henders Webster.

"Ye're late, Sam'l," said Henders.

"What for?"

"Ou, I was thinkin' ye wid be gaen the length o' T'nowhead the nicht, an' I saw Sanders Elshioner makkin's wy there an' oor syne."

"Did ye?" cried Sam'l, adding craftily; "but it's naething to me."

"Tod, lad," said Henders; "gin ye dinna buckle to, Sanders'll be carryin' her off!"

Sam'l flung back his head and passed on.

"Sam'l!" cried Henders after him.

"Ay," said Sam'l, wheeling round.

"Gie Bell a kiss frae me."

The full force of this joke struck neither all at once. Sam'l began to smile at it as he turned down the school-wynd, and it came upon Henders while he was in his garden feeding his ferret. Then he slapped his legs gleefully, and explained the conceit to Will'um Byars, who went into the house and thought it over.

There were twelve or twenty little groups of men in the square, which was lighted by a flare of oil suspended over a cadger's cart. Now and again a staid young woman passed through the square with a basket on her arm, and if she had lingered long enough to give them time, some of

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

the idlers would have addressed her. As it was, they gazed after her, and then grinned to each other.

"Ay, Sam'l," said two or three young men, as Sam'l joined them beneath the town clock.

"Ay, Davit," replied Sam'l.

This group was composed of some of the sharpest wits in Thrums, and it was not to be expected that they would let this opportunity pass. Perhaps when Sam'l joined them he knew what was in store for him.

"Was ye lookin' for T'nowhead's Bell?" asked one.

"Or mebbe ye was wantin' the minister?" suggested another, the same who had walked out twice with Christy Duff and not married her after all.

Sam'l could not think of a good reply at the moment, so he laughed good-naturedly.

"Ondoohtedly she's a snod bit crittur," said Davit, archly.

"An' mighty clever wi' her fingers," added Jamie Deuchars.

"Man, I've thocht o' makkin' up to Bell myself," said Pete Ogle. "Wid there be ony chance, think ye, Sam'l?"

"I'm thinkin' she widna hae ye for her first, Pete," replied Sam'l, in one of those happy flashes that come to some men, "but there's nae sayin' but what she micht tak ye to finish up wi'."

The unexpectedness of this sally startled every

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

one. Sam'l did not set up for a wit, though, like Davit, it was notorious that he could say a cutting thing once in a way.

"Did ye ever see Bell reddin up?" asked Pete, recovering from his overthrow. He was a man who bore no malice.

"It's a sicht," said Sam'l, solemnly.

"Hoo will that be?" asked Jamie Deuchars.

"It's weel worth yer while," said Pete, "to ging atower to the T'nowhead an' see. Ye'll mind the closed-in beds i' the kitchen? Ay, weel, they're a fell spoilt crew, T'nowhead's litlins, an' no that aisy to manage. Th' ither lasses Lisbeth's hae'n had a mighty trouble wi' them. When they war i' the middle o' their reddin up the bairns wid come tumlin' about the floor, but, sal, I assure ye, Bell didna fash lang wi' them. Did she, Sam'l?"

"She did not," said Sam'l, dropping into a fine mode of speech to add emphasis to his remark.

"I'll tell ye what she did," said Pete to the others. "She juist lifted up the litlins, twa at a time, an' flung them into the coffin-beds. Syne she snibbit the doors on them, an' keepit them there till the floor was dry."

"Ay, man, did she so?" said Davit, admiringly.

"I've seen her do't myself," said Sam'l.

"There's no a lassie maks better bannocks this side o' Fetter Lums," continued Pete.

"Her mither tocht her that," said Sam'l; "she was a gran' han' at the bakin', Kitty Ogilvy."

"I've heard say," remarked Jamie, putting it

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

this way so as not to tie himself down to anything, " 'at Bell's scones is equal to Mag Lunan's."

"So they are," said Sam'l, almost fiercely.

"I kin she's a neat han' at singein' a hen," said Pete.

"An' wi't a'," said Davit, "she's a snod, canty bit stocky in her Sabbath claes."

"If onything, thick in the waist," suggested Jamie.

"I dinna see that," said Sam'l.

"I d'na care for her hair either," continued Jamie, who was very nice in his tastes; "something mair yallowchy wid be an improvement."

"A'body kins," growled Sam'l, "'at black hair's the bonniest."

The others chuckled.

"Puir Sam'l!" Pete said.

Sam'l, not being certain whether this should be received with a smile or a frown, opened his mouth wide as a kind of compromise. This was position one with him for thinking things over.

Few Auld Lights, as I have said, went the length of choosing a helpmate for themselves. One day a young man's friends would see him mending the washing-tub of a maiden's mother. They kept the joke until Saturday night, and then he learned from them what he had been after. It dazed him for a time, but in a year or so he grew accustomed to the idea, and they were then married. With a little help, he fell in love just like other people.

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

Sam'l was going the way of others, but he found it difficult to come to the point. He only went courting once a week, and he could never take up the running at the place where he left off the Saturday before. Thus he had not, so far, made great headway. His method of making up to Bell had been to drop in at T'nowhead on Saturday nights and talk with the farmer about the rinderpest.

The farm kitchen was Bell's testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Rob Angus's saw-mill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child's pinafore. Bell was brave, too, as well as energetic. Once Thrums had been overrun with thieves. It is now thought that there may have been only one; but he had the wicked cleverness of a gang. Such was his repute, that there were weavers who spoke of locking their doors when they went from home. He was not very skilful, however, being generally caught, and when they said they knew he was a robber he gave them their things back and went away. If they had given him time there is no doubt that he would have gone off with his plunder. One night he went to T'nowhead, and Bell, who slept in the kitchen, was wakened by the noise. She knew who it would be, so she rose and dressed herself, and went to look for him with a candle. The thief had not known what to do when he got in, and as it was very lonely, he was glad to see

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Bell. She told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and would not let him out by the door until he had taken off his boots, so as not to soil the carpet.

On this Saturday evening Sam'l stood his ground in the square, until by and by he found himself alone. There were other groups there still, but his circle had melted away. They went separately, and no one said good-night. Each took himself off slowly, backing out of the group until he was fairly started.

Sam'l looked about him, and then, seeing that the others had gone, walked round the town-house into the darkness of the brae that leads down and then up to the farm of T'nowhead.

To get into the good graces of Lisbeth Fergus you had to know her ways and humor them. Sam'l, who was a student of women, knew this, and so, instead of pushing the door open and walking in, he went through the rather ridiculous ceremony of knocking. Sanders Elshioner was also aware of this weakness of Lisbeth, but, though he often made up his mind to knock, the absurdity of the thing prevented his doing so when he reached the door. T'nowhead himself had never got used to his wife's refined notions, and when any one knocked he always started to his feet, thinking there must be something wrong.

Lisbeth came to the door, her expansive figure blocking the way in.

"Sam'l," she said.

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

"Lisbeth," said Sam'l.

He shook hands with the farmer's wife, knowing that she liked it, but only said: "Ay, Bell," to his sweetheart, "Ay, T'nowhead," to McQuhatty, and "It's yersel', Sanders," to his rival.

They were all sitting round the fire, T'nowhead, with his feet on the ribs, wondering why he felt so warm, and Bell darned a stocking, while Lisbeth kept an eye on a goblet full of potatoes.

"Sit in to the fire, Sam'l," said the farmer, not, however, making way for him.

"Na, na," said Sam'l, "I'm to bide nae time." Then he sat in to the fire. His face was turned away from Bell, and when she spoke he answered her without looking round. Sam'l felt a little anxious. Sanders Elshioner, who had one leg shorter than the other, but looked well when sitting, seemed suspiciously at home. He asked Bell questions out of his own head, which was beyond Sam'l, and once he said something to her in such a low voice that the others could not catch it. T'nowhead asked curiously what it was, and Sanders explained that he had only said: "Ay, Bell, the morn's the Sabbath." There was nothing startling in this, but Sam'l did not like it. He began to wonder if he was too late, and had he seen his opportunity, would have told Bell of a nasty rumor that Sanders intended to go over to the Free Church if they would make him kirk-officer.

Sam'l had the good-will of T'nowhead's wife,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

who liked a polite man. Sanders did his best, but from want of practise he constantly made mistakes. To-night, for instance, he wore his hat in the house, because he did not like to put up his hand and take it off. T'nowhead had not taken his off either, but that was because he meant to go out by and by and lock the byre door. It was impossible to say which of her lovers Bell preferred. The proper course with an Auld Licht lassie was to prefer the man who proposed to her.

"Ye'll bide a wee, an' hae something to eat?" Lisbeth asked Sam'l, with her eyes on the goblet.

"No, I thank ye," said Sam'l, with true gentility.

"Ye'll better?"

"I dinna think it."

"Hoots, ay; what's to hender ye?"

"Weel, since ye're sae pressin', I'll bide."

No one asked Sanders to stay. Bell could not, for she was but the servant, and T'nowhead knew that the kick his wife had given him meant that he was not to do so either. Sanders whistled to show that he was not uncomfortable.

"Ay, then, I'll be stappin' ower the brae," he said at last.

He did not go, however. There was sufficient pride in him to get him off his chair, but only slowly, for he had to get accustomed to the notion of going. At intervals of two or three minutes he remarked that he must now be going. In the same circumstances Sam'l would have acted sim-

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

ilarly. For a Thrums man it is one of the hardest things in life to get away from anywhere.

At last Lisbeth saw that something must be done. The potatoes were burning, and T'nowhead had an invitation on his tongue.

"Yes, I'll hae to be movin'," said Sanders, hopelessly, for the fifth time.

"Guid-nicht to ye, then, Sanders," said Lisbeth. "Gie the door a fling-to ahent ye."

Sanders, with a mighty effort, pulled himself together. He looked boldly at Bell, and then took off his hat carefully. Sam'l saw with misgivings that there was something in it which was not a handkerchief. It was a paper bag glittering with gold braid, and contained such an assortment of sweets as lads bought for their lasses on the Muckle Friday.

"Hae, Bell," said Sanders, handing the bag to Bell in an off-hand way, as if it were but a trifle. Nevertheless, he was a little excited, for he went off without saying good-night.

No one spoke. Bell's face was crimson. T'nowhead fidgeted on his chair, and Lisbeth looked at Sam'l. The weaver was strangely calm and collected, though he would have liked to know whether this was a proposal.

"Sit in by to the table, Sam'l," said Lisbeth, trying to look as if things were as they had been before.

She put a saucerful of butter, salt, and pepper near the fire to melt, for melted butter is the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

shoeing-horn that helps over a meal of potatoes. Sam'l, however, saw what the hour required, and, jumping up, he seized his bonnet.

"Hing the tatties higher up the joist, Lisbeth," he said, with dignity; "I'se be back in ten mēenits."

He hurried out of the house, leaving the others looking at each other.

"What do ye think?" asked Lisbeth.

"I d'na kin," faltered Bell.

"Thae tatties is lang o' comin' to the boil," said T'nowhead.

In some circles a lover who behaved like Sam'l would have been suspected of intent upon his rival's life, but neither Bell nor Lisbeth did the weaver that injustice. In a case of this kind it does not much matter what T'nowhead thought.

The ten minutes had barely passed when Sam'l was back in the farm kitchen. Hé was too flurried to knock this time, and, indeed, Lisbeth did not expect it of him.

"Bell, hae!" he cried, handing his sweetheart a tinsel bag twice the size of Sanders's gift.

"Losh preserve's!" exclaimed Lisbeth; "I'se warrant there's a shillin's worth."

"There's a' that, Lisbeth—an' mair," said Sam'l, firmly.

"I thank ye, Sam'l," said Bell, feeling an unwonted elation as she gazed at the two paper bags in her lap.

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

"Ye're ower extravegint, Sam'l," Lisbeth said.

"Not at all," said Sam'l; "not at all. But I wouldna advise ye to eat thae ither anes, Bell—they're second quality."

Bell drew back a step from Sam'l.

"How do ye kin?" asked the farmer, shortly; for he liked Sanders.

"I speired i' the shop," said Sam'l.

The goblet was placed on a broken plate on the table, with the saucer beside it, and Sam'l, like the others, helped himself. What he did was to take potatoes from the pot with his fingers, peel off their coats, and then dip them into the butter. Lisbeth would have liked to provide knives and forks, but she knew that beyond a certain point T'nowhead was master in his own house. As for Sam'l, he felt victory in his hands, and began to think that he had gone too far.

In the meantime, Sanders, little witting that Sam'l had trumped his trick, was sauntering along the kirk-wynd with his hat on the side of his head. Fortunately he did not meet the minister.

The courting of T'nowhead's Bell reached its crisis one Sabbath about a month after the events above recorded. The minister was in great force that day, but it is no part of mine to tell how he bore himself. I was there, and am not likely to forget the scene. It was a fateful Sabbath for T'nowhead's Bell and her swains, and destined to

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

be remembered for the painful scandal which they perpetrated in their passion.

Bell was not in the kirk. There being an infant of six months in the house, it was a question of either Lisbeth or the lassie's staying at home with him, and though Lisbeth was unselfish in a general way, she could not resist the delight of going to church. She had nine children besides the baby, and being but a woman, it was the pride of her life to march them into the T'nowhead pew, so well watched that they dared not misbehave, and so tightly packed that they could not fall. The congregation looked at that pew, the mother enviously, when they sang the lines:

"Jerusalem like a city is
Compactly built together."

The first half of the service had been gone through on this particular Sunday without anything remarkable happening. It was at the end of the psalm which preceded the sermon that Sanders Elshioner, who sat near the door, lowered his head until it was no higher than the pews, and in that attitude, looking almost like a four-footed animal, slipped out of the church. In their eagerness to be at the sermon, many of the congregation did not notice him, and those who did put the matter by in their minds for future investigation. Sam'l, however, could not take it so coolly. From his seat in the gallery he saw Sanders disappear, and his mind misgave him.

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

With the true lover's instinct, he understood it all. Sanders had been struck by the fine turnout in the T'nowhead pew. Bell was alone at the farm. What an opportunity to work one's way up to a proposal. T'nowhead was so overrun with children that such a chance seldom occurred, except on a Sabbath. Sanders, doubtless, was off to propose, and he, Sam'l, was left behind.

The suspense was terrible. Sam'l and Sanders had both known all along that Bell would take the first of the two who asked her. Even those who thought her proud admitted that she was modest. Bitterly the weaver repented having waited so long. Now it was too late. In ten minutes Sanders would be at T'nowhead; in an hour all would be over. Sam'l rose to his feet in a daze. His mother pulled him down by the coat-tail, and his father shook him, thinking he was walking in his sleep. He tottered past them, however, hurried up the aisle, which was so narrow that Dan'l Ross could only reach his seat by walking sidewise, and was gone before the minister could do more than stop in the middle of a whirl and gape in horror after him.

A number of the congregation felt that day the advantage of sitting in the laft. What was a mystery to those downstairs was revealed to them. From the gallery windows they had a fine open view to the south, and as Sam'l took the common, which was a short cut, though a steep ascent, to T'nowhead, he was never out of their line of

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

vision. Sanders was not to be seen, but they guessed rightly the reason why. Thinking he had ample time, he had gone round by the main road to save his boots—perhaps a little scared by what was coming. Sam'l's design was to forestall him by taking the shorter path over the burn and up the common.

It was a race for a wife, and several onlookers in the gallery braved the minister's displeasure to see who won. Those who favored Sam'l's suit exultingly saw him leap the stream, while the friends of Sanders fixed their eyes on the top of the common where it ran into the road. Sanders must come into sight there, and the one who reached this point first would get Bell.

As Auld Lights do not walk abroad on the Sabbath, Sanders would probably not be delayed. The chances were in his favor. Had it been any other day in the week, Sam'l might have run. So some of the congregation in the gallery were thinking, when suddenly they saw him bend low and then take to his heels. He had caught sight of Sanders's head bobbing over the hedge that separated the road from the common, and feared that Sanders might see him. The congregation who could crane their necks sufficiently saw a black object, which they guessed to be the carter's hat, crawling along the hedge-top. For a moment it was motionless, and then it shot ahead. The rivals had seen each other. It was now a hot race. Sam'l, dissembling no longer, clattered up

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

the common, becoming smaller and smaller to the onlookers as he neared the top. More than one person in the gallery almost rose to their feet in their excitement. Sam'l had it. No. Sanders was in front. Then the two figures disappeared from view. They seemed to run into each other at the top of the brae, and no one could say who was first. The congregation looked at one another. Some of them perspired. But the minister held on his course.

Sam'l had just been in time to cut Sanders out. It was the weaver's saying that Sanders saw this when his rival turned the corner; for Sam'l was sadly blown. Sanders took in the situation and gave in at once. The last hundred yards of the distance he covered at his leisure, and when he arrived at his destination he did not go in. It was a fine afternoon for the time of year, and he went round to have a look at the pig, about which T'nowhead was a little sinfully puffed up.

"Ay," said Sanders, digging his fingers critically into the grunting animal; "quite so."

"Grumph!" said the pig, getting reluctantly to his feet.

"Ou, ay; yes," said Sanders, thoughtfully.

Then he sat down on the edge of the sty, and looked long and silently at an empty bucket. But whether his thoughts were of T'nowhead's Bell, whom he had lost forever, or of the food the farmer fed his pig on, is not known.

"Lord preserve's! Are ye no at the kirk?"

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

cried Bell, nearly dropping the baby as Sam'l broke into the room.

"Bell!" cried Sam'l.

Then T'nowhead's Bell knew that her hour had come.

"Sam'l," she faltered.

"Will ye hae's, Bell?" demanded Sam'l, glaring at her sheepishly.

"Ay," answered Bell.

Sam'l fell into a chair.

"Bring's a drink o' water, Bell," he said.

But Bell thought the occasion required milk, and there was none in the kitchen. She went out to the byre, still with the baby in her arms, and saw Sanders Elshioner sitting gloomily on the pig-sty.

"Weel, Bell?" said Sanders.

"I thocht ye'd been at the kirk, Sanders," said Bell.

Then there was a silence between them.

"Has Sam'l speired ye, Bell?" asked Sanders stolidly.

"Ay," said Bell again, and this time there was a tear in her eye. Sanders was little better than an "orro man," and Sam'l was a weaver, and yet—but it was too late now. Sanders gave the pig a vicious poke with a stick, and when it had ceased to grunt, Bell was back in the kitchen. She had forgotten about the milk, however, and Sam'l only got water after all.

In after days, when the story of Bell's wooing

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

was told, there were some who held that the circumstances would have almost justified the lassie in giving Sam'l the go-by. But these perhaps forgot that her other lover was in the same predicament as the accepted one—that, of the two, indeed, he was the more to blame, for he set off to T'nowhead on the Sabbath of his own accord, while Sam'l only ran after him. And then there is no one to say for certain whether Bell heard of her suitor's delinquencies until Lisbeth's return from the kirk. Sam'l could never remember whether he told her, and Bell was not sure whether, if he did, she took it in. Sanders was greatly in demand for weeks after to tell what he knew of the affair, but though he was twice asked to tea to the manse among the trees, and subjected thereafter to ministerial cross-examinations, this is all he told. He remained at the pigsty until Sam'l left the farm, when he joined him at the top of the brae, and they went home together.

"It's yersel', Sanders," said Sam'l.

"It is so, Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Very cauld," said Sam'l.

"Blawy," assented Sanders.

After a pause:

"Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Ay."

"I'm hearin' yer to be mairit."

"Ay."

"Weel, Sam'l, she's a snod bit lassie."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Thank ye," said Sam'l.

"I had ance a kin' o' notion o' Bell mysel'," continued Sanders.

"Ye had?"

"Yes, Sam'l; but I thocht better o't."

"Hoo d'ye mean?" asked Sam'l, a little anxiously.

"Weel, Sam'l, mairitch is a terrible responsibility."

"It is so," said Sam'l, wincing.

"An' no the thing to tak up withoot conseederation."

'But it's a blessed and honorable state, Sanders; ye've heard the minister on't."

"They say," continued the relentless Sanders, "'at the minister doesna get on sa weel wi' the wife himsel'."

"So they do," cried Sam'l, with a sinking at the heart.

"I've been telt," Sanders went on, "'at gin you can get the upper han' o' the wife for a while at first, there's the mair chance o' a harmonious exeistence."

"Bell's no the lassie," said Sam'l, appealingly, "to thwart her man."

Sanders smiled.

"D'ye think she is, Sanders?"

"Weel, Sam'l, I d'na want to fluster ye, but she's been ower lang wi' Lisbeth Fergus no to ha' learnt her ways. An' a'boddy kins what a life T'nowhead has wi' her."

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

"Guid sake, Sanders, hoo did ye no speak o' this afoore?"

"I thocht ye kent o't, Sam'l."

They had now reached the square, and the U. P. kirk was coming out. The Auld Licht kirk would be half an hour yet.

"But, Sanders," said Sam'l, brightening up, "ye was on yer way to speir her yersel'."

"I was, Sam'l," said Sanders, "and I canna but be thankfu' ye was ower quick for's."

"Gin't hadna been you," said Sam'l, "I wid never hae thocht o't."

"I'm sayin' naething agin Bell," pursued the other, "but, man Sam'l, a body should be mair deeleberate in a thing o' the kind."

"It was nichty hurried," said Sam'l, wofully.

"It's a serious thing to speir a lassie," said Sanders.

"It's an awfu' thing," said Sam'l.

"But we'll hope for the best," added Sanders, in a hopeless voice.

They were close to the Tenements now, and Sam'l looked as if he were on his way to be hanged.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay, Sanders."

"Did ye—did ye kiss her, Sam'l?"

"Na."

"Hoo?"

"There's was vara little time, Sanders."

"Half an' 'oor," said Sanders.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Was there? Man, Sanders, to tell ye the truth, I never thocht o't."

Then the soul of Elshioner was filled with contempt for Sam'l Dickie.

The scandal blew over. At first it was expected that the minister would interfere to prevent the union, but beyond intimating from the pulpit that the souls of Sabbath-breakers were beyond praying for, and then praying for Sam'l and Sanders at great length, with a word thrown in for Bell, he let things take their course. Some said it was because he was always frightened lest his young men should intermarry with other denominations, but Sanders explained it differently to Sam'l.

"I hav'na a word to say agin the minister," he said; "they're gran' prayers, but, Sam'l, he's a mairit man himsel'."

"He's a' the better for that, Sanders, isna he?"

"Do ye no see," asked Sanders, compassionately, "'at he's tryin' to mak the best o't?"

"Oh, Sanders, man!" said Sam'l.

"Cheer up, Sam'l," said Sanders; "it'll sune be ower."

Their having been rival suitors had not interfered with their friendship. On the contrary, while they had hitherto been mere acquaintances they became inseparables as the wedding-day drew near. It was noticed that they had much to say to each other, and that when they could not

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

get a room to themselves they wandered about together in the churchyard.

When Sam'l had anything to tell Bell, he sent Sanders to tell it, and Sanders did as he was bid. There was nothing that he would not have done for Sam'l.

The more obliging Sanders was, however, the sadder Sam'l grew. He never laughed now on Saturdays, and sometimes his loom was silent half the day. Sam'l felt that Sanders's was the kindness of a friend for a dying man.

It was to be a penny wedding, and Lisbeth Fergus said it was delicacy that made Sam'l superintend the fitting-up of the barn by deputy. Once he came to see it in person, but he looked so ill that Sanders had to see him home. This was on the Thursday afternoon, and the wedding was fixed for Friday.

"Sanders, Sanders!" said Sam'l, in a voice strangely unlike his own, "it'll a' be ower by this time the morn."

"It will," said Sanders.

"If I had only kent her langer," continued Sam'l.

"It wid hae been safer," said Sanders.

"Did ye see the yallow floor in Bell's bonnet?" asked the accepted swain.

"Ay," said Sanders, reluctantly.

"I'm dootin'—I'm sair dootin' she's but a flichty, licht-hearted critter, after a'."

"I had aye my suspecions o't," said Sanders.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Ye hae kent her langer than me," said Sam'l.

"Yes," said Sanders; "but there's nae gettin' at the heart o' women. Man Sam'l, they're desperate cunnin'."

"I'm dootin't; I'm sair dootin't."

"It'll be a warnin' to ye, Sam'l, no to be in sic a hurry i' the futur," said Sanders.

Sam'l groaned.

"Ye'll be gaein' up to the manse to arrange wi' the minister the morn's mornin'," continued Sanders, in a subdued voice.

Sam'l looked wistfully at his friend.

"I canna do't, Sanders," he said, "I canna do't."

"Ye maun," said Sanders.

"It's aisy to speak," retorted Sam'l, bitterly.

"We have a' oor troubles, Sam'l," said Sanders, soothingly, "an' every man maun bear his ain burdens. Johnny Davie's wife's dead, an' he's no repinin'."

"Ay," said Sam'l; "but a death's no mairitch. We hae haen deaths in our family too."

"It may a' be for the best," added Sanders, "an' there wid be a mighty talk i' the hale countryside gin ye didna ging to the minister like a man."

"I maun hae langer to think o't," said Sam'l.

"Bell's mairitch is the morn," said Sanders, decisively.

Sam'l glanced up with a wild look in his eyes.

"Sanders!" he cried.

"Sam'l?"

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

"Ye hae been a guid friend to me, Sanders, in this sair affliction."

"Nothing ava," said Sanders; "doun't mention't."

"But, Sanders, ye canna deny but what your rinnin oot o' the kirk that awfu' day was at the bottom o't a'."

"It was so," said Sanders, bravely.

"An' ye used to be fond o' Bell, Sanders."

"I dinna deny't."

"Sanders, laddie," said Sam'l, bending forward and speaking in a wheedling voice. "I aye thocht it was you she likeit."

"I had some sic idea mysel'," said Sanders.

"Sanders, I canna think to pairt two fowk sae weel suited to ane anither as you an' Bell."

"Canna ye, Sam'l?"

"She wid mak ye a guid wife, Sanders. I hae studied her weel, and she's a thrifty, douce, clever lassie. Sanders, there's no the like o' her. Mony a time, Sanders, I hae said to mysel', 'There a lass ony man micht be prood to tak. A'body says the same, Sanders. There's nae risk ava, man; nane to speak o'. Tak her, laddie, tak her, Sanders; it's a grand chance, Sanders. She's yours for the speirin'. I'll gie her up, Sanders.'"

"Will ye, though?" said Sanders.

"What d'ye think?" asked Sam'l.

"If ye wid rayther," said Sanders, politely.

"There's my han' on't," said Sam'l. "Bless ye, Sanders; ye've been a true frien' to me."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Then they shook hands for the first time in their lives; and soon afterward Sanders struck up the brae to T'nowhead.

Next morning Sanders Elshioner, who had been very busy the night before, put on his Sabbath clothes and strolled up to the manse.

"But—but where is Sam'l?" asked the minister.
"I must see himself."

"It's a new arrangement," said Sanders.

"What do you mean, Sanders?"

"Bell's to marry me," explained Sanders.

"But—but what does Sam'l say?"

"He's willin'," said Sanders.

"And Bell?"

"She's willin', too. She prefers it."

"It is unusual," said the minister.

"It's a' richt," said Sanders.

"Well, you know best," said the minister.

"You see, the house was taen, at ony rate," continued Sanders. "An' I'll juist ging in til't instead o' Sam'l."

"Quite so."

"An' I cudna think to disappoint the lassie."

"Your sentiments do you credit, Sanders," said the minister, "but I hope you do not enter upon the blessed state of matrimony without full consideration of its responsibilities. It is a serious business, marriage."

"It's a' that," said Sanders; "but I'm willin' to stan' the risk."

So, as soon as it could be done, Sanders El-

T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

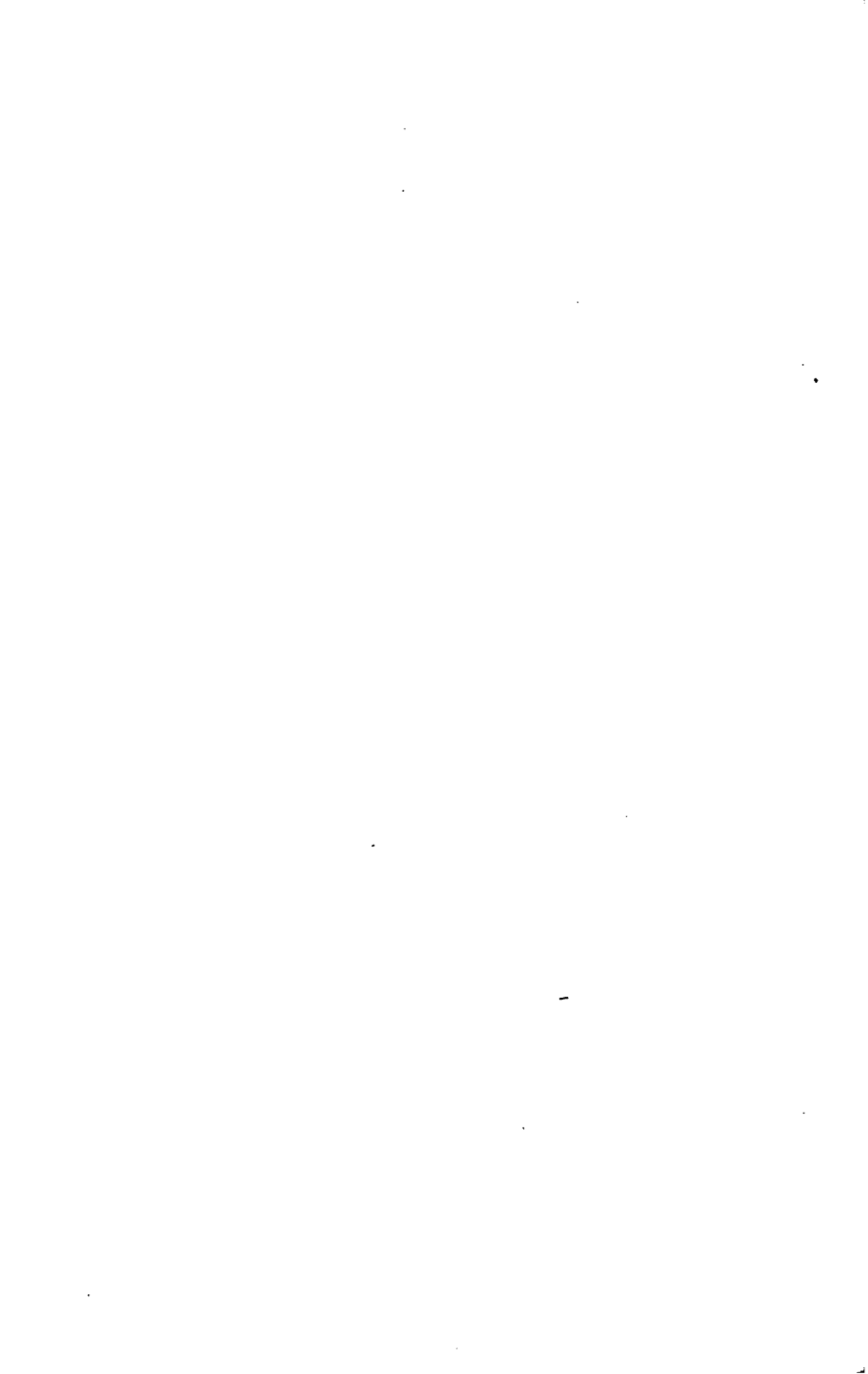
shioner took to wife T'nowhead's Bell, and I remember seeing Sam'l Dickie trying to dance at the penny wedding.

Years afterward it was said in Thrums that Sam'l had treated Bell badly, but he was never sure about it himself.

"It was a near thing—a mighty near thing," he admitted in the square.

"They say," some other weaver would remark, "'at it was you Bell liked best."

"I d'na kin," Sam'l would reply, "but there's nae doot the lassie was fell fond o' me. Ou, a mere passin' fancy's ye nicht say."



THE GRAY NUN

BY NATALY VON ESCHSTRUTH



THE GRAY NUN

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WHEN I was a young man I once made a foreign journey, betaking myself to the royal court of X. on affairs of state. In those days politics would take strange turns, not of unmingled delight, and so it happened that my mission was prolonged well into the winter, and kept me at X. until the carnival season. But at this I did not repine, for to pass a winter in a beautiful climate and amid the fascinating society of a court seemed a welcome change to my enthusiastic, pleasure-loving young soul.

The reigning sovereign had a predilection for masked balls,—a traditionally favorite amusement at the palace, I was told—and accordingly several fancy dress festivities were enacted on the royal premises during the carnival. The first I was unable to participate in because of an inflamed eye, and therefore awaited the second with all the keener anticipation.

In the becoming costume of a Prussian officer in the army of Frederick the Great, and with the agreeable sensation of being specially well disguised beneath my mask and safe from recogni-

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

tion, I mingled in the gay throng of the dancers and enjoyed to the full the charm of the brilliant and delicious event. An exquisitely graceful little water-nix had conquered my heart. The champagne was bubbling in my blood, and in wild spirits I was pursuing the fleeing Undine into an adjacent apartment.

Suddenly I stopped as though spellbound, and found myself staring into a pair of dark eyes, black as night, which were rigidly fixed upon me. Standing aloof, in a corner of the room, I saw a nun. Her long gray garment reached to the ground, and lay about her very feet in folds like a train. Her arms hung straight down, the hands being concealed in the loose sleeves. White linen bands covered her head and chin, and rendered even her mouth invisible, while her forehead and the upper part of her face were protected by a black velvet mask. And the blackness of those eyes that penetrated me was so intense that scarcely were any whites discernible.

An indescribable emotion ran over me as I stood under the ban of an evil power, as it were, returning the look of that strange figure. I had forgotten Undine. Drawn by some invisible force, I approached the nun with mechanical footstep.

"Why, fair mask," I accosted her with a bold laugh, "are you alone? Surely you know that for dancing and love two are needed!"

THE GRAY NUN

Briefly, like a Chinese idol, she nodded her head in assent; a thrill seemed to pass over her wonderfully slender shape; yet she did not budge.

I became more venturesome from a sudden feeling as of fire rushing through my veins.

"You may be vowed to seclusion, beautiful bride of Heaven, but to-day the convent walls have released you, to-day you are of the world and the flesh, to-day you are mine!"

Thus I cried aloud, forgetting in my excitement that I was in a country where my mother tongue was only spoken and understood at the German legation.

In a moment it occurred to me: Did the mask know German?

To my astonishment, she gave an immediate sign of intelligence by gliding, silently as a shadow, another step in my direction, and her blazing eyes appeared to kindle with merriment. Had she a veil over her eyes? It almost looked so, and this extraordinary measure of precaution challenged me the more strongly to overcome her reluctance to being known.

"Do you understand me?" I asked.

She nodded in the same brief, jerky manner as before.

"Do you know me?"

Similarly she answered by negative motions of the head. I stepped up close to her with the question:

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"But will you not know me and love me? Come into my arms, and let us dance!"

Then something happened that at the moment I found surprising and extremely startling, yet which I took for a mere carnival freak, while later on I could scarce review the occurrence with any degree of clearness.

The nun threw her arms about me abruptly and almost desperately, and whirled me into a frenzied dance. I felt no body between my arms, and did not hear the rustle of her dress; I only saw those enigmatic dark eyes, which glowed near, very near, my own. And in mad career, regardless of the musical time or of the tune played, my curious partner tore around the room with me faster and faster, and with ever increasing fury. Her arms gripped me tighter and tighter and I was threatened with complete loss of breath in the wild race. Of a sudden I received a violent blow, resembling an electric shock, from each of her hands on my shoulders, felt myself all at once liberated, and staggered faint against a pyramid of plants. Boisterous laughter sounded on my ear; some other masks had surrounded and seized me, exclaiming:

"Look at the fine gentleman! He is out of his mind, dancing about the room like a madman, quite alone!"

I opened my eyes and looked all around. What had become of my partner?

Not a sign of her was to be seen, although this

THE GRAY NUN

other room was likewise very large, just then not well filled with people.

"Have I been dancing alone?" I gasped, tearing the mask off my burning face.

"Quite alone! Did you imagine it was with your sweetheart?" was the mocking, noisy reply.

I was deeply annoyed. "Nonsense!" I cried. "You are all in the conspiracy! Where has the nun gone? It was no lady at all, it was a man in disguise!"

They laughed still more, and some whispered behind fans that I must be drunk.

Strange sensations invaded me. Had a joke been played at my expense? Had a member of the German legation dressed in female clothes, and in the height of his whimsical caprice danced with me in that insane fashion? Were the guests in the secret, and were they amusing themselves—as the freedom of the carnival permitted—with teasing a foreigner? Yet surely the mysterious nun must be discoverable. My knees were trembling from a weakness I was unable to account for, but I collected myself, and while various thoughts coursed through my brain for a solution of this carnival prank, I hastened with feverish speed through rooms and galleries in quest of the nun. But in vain. I espied neither herself, nor met anyone who had seen her. The lackeys and doorkeepers assured me in perfect good faith that they had seen no nun of any sort.

"The costume is one of which His Majesty

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

does not approve," I was informed in the cloak-room. "It is considered irreverent to appear at balls here in the spiritual garb of a nun or a monk, and therefore it is not done. It would certainly have been observed by us had any lady or gentleman transgressed against the prevailing usage."

"Then perhaps I may have mistaken for a nun some other mask, who intended in her gray suit to represent Twilight or Care," I excused myself hesitatingly, though I had an accurate eye for dresses, and could have registered a solemn oath that the mysterious unknown was even wearing especially authentic claustral attire. No one, however, could by any effort remember having noticed a costume anything like that described by me.

"Are there any secret passages to any of the rooms and galleries which are the scene of to-night's festivities?" I asked a doorkeeper. He looked at me in surprise, and answered:

"All ways of communication were opened to-day because of the crowd of guests, but for safety's sake guarded and watched more carefully than usual. Only the tapestried corridor running the length of the great colonnade to the royal apartments was left unguarded, since in that place there is no possibility of improper intrusion."

A new idea flashed across me. The spot on which I had first set eyes on my nun was at the

THE GRAY NUN

entrance to that corridor. Might not a member of the royal family have elected to make me, as a novice in this foreign court society, the subject of a merry jest? No doubt the nun was a man in disguise, and the young princes and dukes were probably capable of pouncing on the victim and dancing him to death.

My confusion was perhaps very diverting, and the secrecy of the few spectators of the joke, who were, of course, initiated, was quite praiseworthy. They asserted not having seen a nun at all, and laughed at me for having rushed round the room alone, like a lunatic. Obviously there was no further room for doubt, this explanation and no other was valid. Why had I not thought of this before!

So I joined in the hilarity of the others and made the best of my discomfiture. In any case, the manner in which my partner had dismissed me betrayed a pair of powerful masculine fists! My shoulders, on which she had come down so vigorously, ached as if they were broken, and I was still unable to conquer entirely a peculiar sensation of uneasiness. But while I was pursuing my investigations the clock struck twelve, the company unmasked, and gaily flocked toward the supper rooms. I felt particularly entitled to refreshments, and in the course of my indulgence in the good things of my selection, my faintness—which was more astonishing to my robust, muscular young self than any carnival

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

joke in the world could have been—passed off completely. I was as happy and lively as before, and enjoyed the remainder of the ball as much as I had the beginning. I tried to dismiss the episode from my mind. For a few days I felt a dull pain in my shoulders, which annoyed me at night also, and disturbed my sleep. The image of the nun haunted me, and the sombre, penetrating eyes were present to me in my very dreams. This vexed me, and I mentally abused the royal gentleman in every key who had pushed his joke rather too far.

A week passed, and the court chamberlain issued invitations for the third masked ball at the palace. I purchased a sailor's dress, and on the evening of the ball tripped up the marble stairs in the best of spirits. It had in the meanwhile occurred to me that I had perhaps imbibed too much, and that the prince in nun's clothing had perhaps observed my condition, and made me his victim for that reason. But I rejected that proposition. In the first place, I had not taken much to drink; certainly two or three glasses of champagne and lemonade were not worth mentioning when I remembered what quantities of alcohol I had frequently absorbed in my university days in Germany. I was a brave boon companion, and capable of consuming a great deal. So how should a few paltry little glasses make me so unsteady on my feet as to collapse in dancing a fast gallop? Absurd! I was sure

THE GRAY NUN

enough of myself, and sufficiently well brought up in social customs, to know how much one may drink at a court ball. No—I was convinced that I had not been intoxicated, but on this occasion I resolved to exercise special caution, and to be strictly temperate, in the event of the disguised perpetrator of pranks again attempting to make the German stranger the butt of his impudence. This time he should meet his match; I would keep my head clear and my feet steady enough to venture a dance with him. The constantly suspicious attitude of my mind, to be sure, interfered with my pleasure very considerably. I was in a too observant mood to float on the topmost wave of enjoyment, and besides an extraordinary disquietude had seized upon me, a contraction about the heart that was quite new to me, such as sensitive people undergo before a storm or in anticipation of momentous changes of fortune. I wandered about restlessly. Numerous though the merry masks that flitted around me, that nun's indescribable black eyes did not appear, and no effort was made to involve me again as the hero of another frolic. Time was dragging heavily. I glanced at my watch, and wished the supper hour might be near. The finger only pointed to half past eleven, so that I must still possess my soul in patience for half an hour. It was a lovely, mild, moonlight night; the doors to the tapestried passage and the colonnade had been thrown open, and I con-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

cluded to take a breath of the fragrant air and a rapid view of the illuminated town in its festive brilliancy of a carnival night.

A female pierrot dances past me with Don Juan, and, with a laugh, throws a handful of confetti in my face. I retaliate—a few phrases are exchanged—I look after her for a moment—and then turn to the entrance of the corridor, to get out into the colonnade.

I am rooted to the ground!

Standing aside in a corner, on the very same spot as before, is my nun, staring at me with the same unfathomable eyes as a week ago!

Where had she come from?

Out of the ground? Or had she slipped in through the door during my banter with the pierrot?

She had come through the door, of course.

I am utterly amazed. The same costume. The same joke. How clumsy of the prince to repeat himself. I am inclined to ignore the impertinent young gentleman, and pass him proudly by—yet—strange—again I am attracted irresistibly, as by a supernatural power, held by those black orbs. I am quite certain of my wits this time: the dress is really the forbidden costume of a nun, and, so far as I can judge, exact in every particular. On her breast hangs a large cross, which is especially conspicuous. It is of dull gold, with emeralds and pearls inlaid, of

THE GRAY NUN

peculiar shape, and certainly antique. The pious nun seems to have regaled herself with excessive haste at some sideboard, since the white collar and the front of the gray bodice show oblong dark stains, as though some beverage had been spilt.

"Well, fair mask," I finally remark in a mocking tone, although my heart is beating furiously, "you have been waiting for me here, I presume?"

She nods slowly and solemnly.

"Do you imagine, by chance, that I wish to dance another hurricane with you?"

Again she assents, but more emphatically.

"Then," say I, ironically, "see where you can find a new blockhead, my muscular fairy! My shoulders are not well yet!"

Her arms move—hands there are none visible in the long, roomy sleeves—they are stretched out to me as if in mute appeal. A cold shiver runs down my back, I know not why.

"If I dance with you again," I angrily exclaim, "you will not fare quite so well as last time! I am firmer on my feet to-night than I was last week!"

She presses her arms to her breast, something like a tremor agitates the gray shape, and her head is slightly raised. Her position and demeanor, though she utters not a word, denote intense longing.

The blood rushes to my head—I must go a step nearer to her—I must!

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"If I dance with you, it will be only on one condition!"

With a profound sigh her bosom heaves, her arms fall to her side, her body is humbly bent forward as if in complete surrender, and as if to say: Ask what you will!

"My condition is that you afterward reveal yourself."

She nods stiffly, like a marionette.

"Swear to it!"

She raises her arm for the oath, but the gray folds still conceal her hand.

"Woe betide you if you deceive me!"

She shakes her head, and repeats the passionate gesture of entreaty. Her slender form trembles with feverish impatience, and the wonderful eyes seem to plead, in extreme urgency: Come quickly!

I put out my arms—

Once more does the terrible woman rush at me, once more am I held in that mad embrace, once more—on the wings of the wind—do we dash round the room! And once more are all my senses lost in the fiendish whirl!

I attempt to struggle, would pit the abounding strength of my youth against the woman and subdue her. In vain! I can think, I can act, no longer. My whole being is in a swoon, and I am conscious of nothing but two icy lips pressed upon mine with a vehemence calculated to draw my very life out of me.

THE GRAY NUN

A shudder seizes me, and the fear of death, and then—again that blow on my shoulders—

I feel as if a pair of iron clamps had been taken off me and I had been freed, and I sink down upon a sofa.

A laughing, jeering crowd surrounds me, shouting:

"The sailor is crazy! He has gone out of his mind!"

Have I again been dancing alone in public?

I jump up in a rage, and exclaim, as I toss back my dishevelled hair from my burning brow:

"Abominable trickery! Let me pass! Let me get my hands on her, and unmask her!"

Something rings on the floor. It has fallen from my hand, hitherto clenched and just now opened. Triumphant I snatch it up, exulting:

"Her cross! Ha! that shall be my clue!"

On this occasion, too, no trace of the mysterious nun was to be found. It was at first superciliously assumed, as before, that I must be drunk or insane, but my serious mood and energetic investigations soon altered that notion. I might myself have doubted my mental soundness had it not been for the cross in my hand, which I at once recognized as being that worn by the nun, and had not a lackey finally confessed to having beheld the strange figure. He was coming from the colonnade with a tray of refreshments when he saw me in conversation with her. The mask had something familiar about her, he

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

said, but he could not remember where he had seen her before. He had been a servant in the palace for forty years.

Nobody thought of a spectre; on the other hand extravagant speculations became rife of a conspirator being at work. It was rumored the king had originally intended to wear a sailor costume. Of course, it was him the uncanny visitor had designs upon. In view of the fact that the political horizon was very dark and clouded at that time, the conjecture was perhaps not altogether phantastical, and for this reason the report quickly reached the ears of the king and the royal family. I was promptly summoned before His Majesty, and it gave me a sort of revengeful pleasure to relate the incident to that august person. For I was still fully persuaded that some young member of his family had played this obnoxious trick upon me.

The king nodded thoughtfully upon my frank declaration that, according to my researches, the enigmatical female could only have come from the royal apartments.

Said his Majesty:

"May I ask you, my dear Baron, to show me the cross you found?"

I put it into his hand.

For a moment the king stared upon it speechless. Then he turned it over, and ejaculated, roughly almost under the emotion of his violent surprise:

THE GRAY NUN

"Great God—why—it is—I"

And he pointed to the small, delicately engraved initials, surmounted by a crown, in the middle of the cross. Very pale and with heaving breast he went on:

"A nun, a gray nun, you say? What would the object of such a joke be? and how—how should this cross come back among the living? Baron, come with me, I must request your confidence and secrecy!"

We passed through several rooms, and then arrived at a narrow gallery whose walls were hung with portraits of royal personages. The king came abruptly to a halt, and without himself looking up indicated a certain picture:

"Observe that painting! Do you see the same cross there that you have in your hand?"

Involuntarily I uttered the loud cry:

"Why, that is she! Holy Heavens! It is my nun!"

"The cross—compare the cross!" urged the king, his slender, white hand trembling with agitation.

A frosty current ran through my veins as I compared the pictured cross with that in my companion's hand. It was the same—not a doubt of it—and the eyes, too, were the same, as also the dress and the whole figure were unmistakably those of the gray nun I had danced with. Yet in those conspicuously large, deep black eyes lay not an expression of peacefulness and mild resig-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

nation, but a world of passionate feeling. Having assured the king of the identity of the cross, and he having informed me that it was an ancient heirloom of which no duplicate existed, he bade me accompany him further.

Arrived in the antechamber to his apartments, the king gave an order to one of the attendants on duty there. He walked up and down the room for a few moments in visible excitement, and then, stopping before me, and looking at me searchingly, he asked:

"Have you ever, in the course of your life, met with a manifestation of the supernatural?"

I was so bewildered and nervous that I scarcely could remember enough French to reply:

"May it please your Majesty, I have not."

"Do you believe in the possibility of the dead returning?"

"Not in the sense of their coming as apparitions. I always was, still am, a skeptic on the point of ghost stories in general, nevertheless I am a Christian, and I believe and know that we continue to live after death."

The king stared at me mechanically:

"You are a Protestant, and you say you are a skeptic. Curious—only you saw the apparition—it was revealed to no one else?"

"Then your Majesty is of the opinion that this is actually a case of a spectral apparition?"

"Certainly. It seems much more plausible than open theft. This very cross I myself—"

THE GRAY NUN

He interrupted his sentence as he turned to the door, through which, with profound obeisances, entered two ladies in waiting—probably the queen's. His Majesty addressed one of them in French, no doubt to enable me to participate in the conversation:

"You were present, Madame M., when Princess A. was laid in her coffin seventeen years ago?"

A low curtesy was the affirmative reply.

"And you also, Madame U.?"

"I had the honor, your Majesty, of rendering her royal highness the last earthly services."

"You remember perfectly what dress the deceased was buried in?"

"Quite well, your Majesty. It was the regular dress of the Order of Gray Sisters, of which her royal highness was a member."

"Do you recollect whether she took any ornaments to her last resting place?"

"Excepting the golden cross which your Majesty hung round her neck on the day she took the vow, no jewelry was put on the princess. The duchess even drew the little sapphire ring from her royal highness' finger, to keep it as a remembrance and wear it herself."

"You are absolutely certain that the cross went into the coffin? You could swear to it?"

"I could do so with fullest conviction, your Majesty."

"Would you recognize the cross?"

"To be sure I should."

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Is this it?"

"Good Heavens—it is! On the back there ought to be the initials of her royal highness!"

"Here they are," said the king, reversing the cross. The old woman shrank back appalled.

"Then, your Majesty, the vault has been broken into!"

"Possibly it has. The matter shall be investigated. I am much obliged to you, ladies, and earnestly request you will both preserve unconditional silence as to our present interview."

"Well," said the king to me, after the ladies in waiting had withdrawn, "how do you account for this cross being here in my hand, considering it was put into the coffin? You think the vault may have been pillaged? That, I believe, is out of the question. The object of a carnival freak, which could have been perpetrated just as easily in any other dress, is far too slight to make such a horrible offense as the violation of the dead worth while! But I intend to have the vault examined, and beg, my dear baron, that you will attend. For the present, good night."

I spent a dreadful night, torturing my sleepless brain for a solution of the riddle, and being forever haunted by the nun's dark eyes. It was late when I woke.

Some hours after, the coffin was opened in the presence of the king, whose surmise proved correct. The bolts on the coffin were intact. The gold chain was there, safe round the princess'

THE GRAY NUN

neck. But the cross was gone. There was not the remotest sign of violence.

How I got out of that vault, I do not know. I remember feeling faint, and being supported by two court officials. I am unaware of what happened next. It was the only instance in my life in which my system had so entirely given way. A serious illness was apprehended, but my strong constitution won the day. For a long time my mind was in a precarious state.

When I had recovered, the king sent for me.

"Are you still a skeptic?" he asked in a grave voice.

"No, your Majesty, I am convinced now."

Whereupon the king himself deigned to communicate to me the particulars relating to the golden cross.

Princess A. was a daughter of one of his cousins, and she was their fifth child. The duchess, a very pious woman, made a vow before the birth of her sixth child, that if it was a boy, her youngest daughter should be dedicated to the service of the church and take the veil. A son was born, and Princess A. henceforth was educated for the profession of a nun in becoming retirement and seclusion. Unfortunately, however, the natural traits of the girl seemed to be entirely in opposition to that reverend calling. An irrepressible vivacity of spirit, an intense coveting of worldly joys and pleasures characterized her, and the more she was separated from

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

the world the more ardent grew her desire to live in it. Heartrending scenes of resistance and tears were enacted, and the reigning sovereign felt so much pity for the spirited young creature that he attempted to save her from her fate of being immured in convent walls by offering to apply to the pope for a dispensation releasing the mother from her promise. But the duchess desperately combated this idea. Her wild laments, that to break her vow would entail her forfeiture of eternal salvation, her protestations, her tears, her entreaties, at last prevailed upon the princess to join the Order of the Gray Sisters. For a short space all seemed to go well. The fervid heart of the royal nun was apparently beating placidly, in the quiet claustral surroundings. But during the winter the duchess fell sick, and the young bride of the church was called to her bedside. Princess A. had remained with her mother for several weeks, and about that time the carnival season began. Masked balls were given in the palace, and while the horns and violins were sounding in the ballroom Princess A. lay on her knees in the throes of dreadful despair, tearing her hair in furious longing for that lost paradise. She at last succeeded in bribing a chambermaid to secretly procure her a fancy dress. If it was to cost her immortal soul, once she would dance and be young and happy! The plot was betrayed, and the angriest reproaches were poured out by her parents upon

THE GRAY NUN

the perjured, rebellious nun! Princess A. was locked up, and was to be removed to the convent the next day. However, as the festivities in the palace were reaching their height that night, the unhappy young nun lay expiring in her room. She had taken poison, although the report was spread in the capital that failure of the heart had caused her death. How she came into possession of the poison no one ever discovered. While she was writhing in terrible agony her half-crazed mother put a cup of milk to her lips as an antidote. She dashed it passionately aside and the spilt milk left stains on her dress.

How hard it was to die! Again and again she tore her black hair. Again and again she uttered the bitterest imprecations and the fiercest cries for a taste of youth and happiness. At length she stood up, straining her ears for the music in the ballroom.

And then she screamed aloud:

"Oh, I must dance once! I must kiss once! Let me be happy once! I cannot die before I dance! Let me go—let me dance—let me—"

She drew herself up to her full height, her eyes glowed like live coals, she took a few steps towards the door—

"I must dance—let me dance!" she gasped, and fell stiffly forward on the floor—dead.



SAC-AU-DOS

BY JORIS KARL HUYSMANS



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AS soon as I had finished my studies my parents deemed it useful to my career to cause me to appear before a table covered with green cloth and surmounted by the living busts of some old gentlemen who interested themselves in knowing whether I had learned enough of the dead languages to entitle me to the degree of Bachelor.

The test was satisfactory. A dinner to which all my relations, far and near, were invited, celebrated my success, affected my future, and ultimately fixed me in the law. Well, I passed my examination and got rid of the money provided for my first year's expenses with a blond girl who, at times, pretended to be fond of me.

I frequented the Latin Quarter assiduously and there I learned many things; among others to take an interest in those students who blew their political opinions into the foam of their beer, every night, then to acquire a taste for the works of George Sand and of Heine, of Edgard Quinet, and of Henri Mürger.

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

The psychophysical moment of silliness was upon me.

That lasted about a year; gradually I ripened. The electoral struggles of the closing days of the Empire left me cold; I was the son neither of a Senator nor a proscript and I had but to outlive, no matter what the régime, the traditions of mediocrity and wretchedness long since adopted by my family. The law pleased me but little. I thought that the *Code* had been purposely maldirected in order to furnish certain people with an opportunity to wrangle, to the utmost limit, over the smallest words; even to-day it seems to me that a phrase clearly worded can not reasonably bear such diverse interpretation.

I was sounding my depths, searching for some state of being that I might embrace without too much disgust, when the late Emperor found one for me; he made me a soldier through the maladroitness of his policy.

The war with Prussia broke out. To tell the truth I did not understand the motives that made that butchery of armies necessary. I felt neither the need of killing others nor of being killed by them. However that may be, enrolled in the *Garde mobile* of the Seine, I received orders, after having gone in search of an outfit, to visit the barber and to be at the barracks in the Rue Lourcine at seven o'clock in the evening.

I was at the place punctually. After roll-call

SAC-AU-DOS

part of the regiment swarmed out of the barrack gates and emptied into the street. Then the sidewalks raised a shout and the gutters ran.

Crowding one against another, workmen in blouses, workmen in tatters, soldiers strapped and gaitered, without arms, they scanned to the clink of glasses the Marseillaise over which they shouted themselves hoarse with their voices out of time. Heads geared with képis¹ of incredible height and ornamented with vizors fit for blind men and with tin cockades of red, white and blue, muffled in blue-black jackets with madder-red collars and cuffs, breached in blue linen pantaloons with a red stripe down the side, the militia of the Seine kept howling at the moon before going forth to conquer Prussia. That was a deafening uproar at the wine shops, a hubbub of glasses, cans and shrieks, cut into here and there by the rattling of a window shaken by the wind. Suddenly the roll of the drum muffled all that clamor; a new column poured out of the barracks; there was carousing and tippling indescribable. Those soldiers who were drinking in the wine shops shot now out into the streets, followed by their parents and friends who disputed the honor of carrying their knapsacks; the ranks were broken; it was a confusion of soldiers and citizens; mothers wept, fathers, more contained, sputtered wine, children frisked for joy and

¹ Military hats.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

shrieked patriotic songs at the top of their shrill voices.

They crossed Paris helter-skelter by the flashes of lightning that whipped the storming clouds into white zigzags. The heat was overpowering, the knapsack was heavy; they drank at every corner of the street; they arrived at last at the railway station of Aubervilliers. There was a moment of silence broken by the sound of sobbing, dominated again by a burst of the *Marseillaise*, then they stalled us like cattle in the cars. "Good night, Jules! may we meet soon again! Be good! Above all write to me!" They squeezed hands for a last time, the train whistled, we had left the station. We were a regular shovelful of fifty men in that box that rolled away with us. Some were weeping freely, jeered at by the others who, completely lost in drink, were sticking lighted candles into their provisions and bawling at the top of their voices: "Down with Badinguet! and long live Rochefort!"²

Others, in a corner by themselves, stared silently and sullenly at the broad floor that kept vibrating in the dust. All at once the convoy makes a halt—I got out. Complete darkness—twenty-five minutes after midnight.

On all sides stretch the fields, and in the distance lighted up by sharp flashes of lightning, a

² Badinguet, nickname given to Napoleon III; Henri Rochefort, anti-Napoleon journalist and agitator.

SAC-AU-DOS

cottage, a tree sketch their silhouette against a sky swollen by the tempest. Only the grinding and rumbling of the engine is heard, whose clusters of sparks flying from the smokestack scatter like a bouquet of fireworks the whole length of the train. Every one gets out, goes forward as far as the engine, which looms up in the night and becomes huge. The stop lasted quite two hours. The signal disks flamed red, the engineer was waiting for them to reverse. They turn; again we get back into the wagons, but a man who comes up on the run and swinging a lantern, speaks a few words to the conductor, who immediately backs the train into a siding where we remain motionless. Not one of us knows where we are. I descend again from the carriage, and sitting on an embankment, I nibble at a bit of bread and drink a drop or two, when the whirl of a hurricane whistles in the distance, approaches, roaring and vomiting fire, and an interminable train of artillery passed at full speed, carrying along horses, men, and cannon whose bronze necks sparkle in a confusion of light. Five minutes after we take up our slow advance, again interrupted by halts that grow longer and longer. The journey ends with day-break, and leaning from the car window, worn out by the long watch of the night, I look out upon the country that surrounds us: a succession of chalky plains, closing in the horizon, a band of pale green like the color of a sick turquoise,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

a flat country, gloomy, meagre, the beggarly Champagne Pouilleuse!

Little by little the sun brightens, we, rumbling on the while, end, however, by getting there! Leaving at eight o'clock in the evening, we were delivered at three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day. Two of the militia had dropped by the way, one who had taken a header from the top of the car into the river, the other who had broken his head on the ledge of a bridge. The rest, after having pillaged the hovels and the gardens, met along the route wherever the train stopped, either yawned, their lips puffed out with wine, and their eyes swollen, or amused themselves by throwing from one side of the carriage to the other branches of shrubs and hen-coops which they had stolen.

The disembarking was managed after the same fashion as the departure. Nothing was ready; neither canteen, nor straw, nor coats, nor arms, nothing, absolutely nothing. Only tents full of manure and of insects, just left by the troops off for the frontier. For three days we live at the mercy of Mourmelon.⁸ Eating a sausage one day and drinking a bowl of café-au-lait the next, exploited to the utmost by the natives, sleeping, no matter how, without straw and without covering. Truly such a life was not calculated to give us a taste for the calling they had inflicted on us.

Once in camp, the companies separated; the

⁸ A suburb of Chalons.

SAC-AU-DOS

laborers took themselves to the tents of their fellows; the bourgeois did the same. The tent in which I found myself was not badly managed, for we succeeded in driving out by argument of wine the two fellows, the native odor of whose feet was aggravated by a long and happy neglect.

One or two days passed. They made us mount guard with the pickets, we drank a great deal of eau-de-vie, and the drink-shops of Mourmelon were full without let, when suddenly Canrobert⁴ passed us in review along the front line of battle. I see him now on his big horse, bent over the saddle, his hair flying, his waxed mustaches in a ghastly face. A mutiny was breaking out. Deprived of everything, and hardly convinced by that marshal that we lacked nothing, we growled in chorus when he talked of repressing our complaints by force: "Ran, plan, plan, a hundred thousand men afoot, to Paris, to Paris!"

Canrobert grew livid, and shouted, planting his horse in the midst of us. "Hats off to a marshal of France!" Again a howl goes up from the ranks; then turning bridle, followed in confusion by his staff officers, he threatened us with his finger, whistling between his separated teeth. "You shall pay dear for this, gentlemen from Paris!"

⁴Canrobert, a brave and distinguished veteran, head of the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Rhine.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Two days after this episode, the icy water of the camp made me so sick that there was urgent need of my entering the hospital. After the doctor's visit, I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of a corporal, here I am going limping along, dragging my legs and sweating under my harness. The hospital is gorged with men; they send me back. I then go to one of the nearest military hospitals; a bed stands empty; I am admitted. I put down my knapsack at last, and with the expectation that the major would forbid me to move, I went out for a walk in the little garden which connected the set of buildings. Suddenly there issued from the door a man with bristling beard and bulging eyes. He plants his hands in the pockets of a long dirt-brown cloak, and shouts out from the distance as soon as he sees me:

"Hey you, man! What are you doing over here?" I approach, I explain to him the motive that brings me. He thrashes his arms about and bawls:

"Go in again! You have no right to walk about in this garden until they give you your costume."

I go back into the room, a nurse arrives and brings me a great military coat, pantaloons, old shoes without heels, and a cap like a nightcap. I look at myself, thus grotesquely dressed, in my little mirror. Good Heavens, what a face and what an outfit! With my haggard eyes and my

SAC-AU-DOS

sallow complexion, with my hair cut short, and my nose with the bumps shining; with my long mouse-gray coat, my pants stained russet, my great heelless shoes, my colossal cotton cap, I am prodigiously ugly. I could not keep from laughing. I turn my head toward the side of my bed neighbor, a tall boy of Jewish type, who is sketching my portrait in a notebook. We become friends at once; I tell him to call me Eugène Lejantel; he responds by telling me to call him Francis Emonot; we recall to each other this and that painter; we enter into a discussion of esthetics and forget our misfortune. Night arrives; they portion out to us a dish of boiled meat dotted black with a few lentils, they pour us out brimming cups of coco-clairet, and I undress, enchanted at stretching myself out in a bed without keeping my clothes and my shoes on.

The next morning I am awakened at about six o'clock by a great fracas at the door and a clatter of voices. I sit up in bed, I rub my eyes, and I see the gentleman of the night before, still dressed in his wrapper, brown the color of cachou, who advances majestically, followed by a train of nurses. It was the major. Scarcely inside, he rolls his dull green eyes from right to left and from left to right, plunges his hands in his pockets and bawls:

"Number One, show your leg—your dirty leg. Eh, it's in a bad shape, that leg, that sore runs

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

like a fountain; lotion of bran and water, lint, half-rations, a strong licorice tea. Number Two, show your throat—your dirty throat. It's getting worse and worse, that throat; the tonsils will be cut out to-morrow."

"But, doctor—"

"Eh, I am not asking anything from you, am I? Say one word and I'll put you on a diet."

"But, at least—"

"Put that man on a diet. Write: diet, gargles, strong licorice tea."

In that vein he passed all the sick in review, prescribing for all, the syphilitics and the wounded, the fevered and the dysentery patients his strong licorice tea. He stopped in front of me, stared into my face, tore off my covering, punched my stomach with his fist, ordered albuminated water for me, the inevitable tea; and went out snorting and dragging his feet.

Life was difficult with the men who were about us. There were twenty-one in our sleeping quarters. At my left slept my friend, the painter; on my right, a great devil of a trumpeter, with face pocked like a sewing thimble and yellow as a glass of bile. He combined two professions, that of cobbler by day and a procurer of girls by night. He was, in other respects, a comical fellow who frisked about on his hands, or on his head, telling you in the most naïve way in the world the manner in which he expedited at the toe of his boot the work of his

SAC-AU-DOS

menials, or intoned in a touching voice sentimental songs:

"I have cherished in my sorrow—ow
But the friendship of a swallow—ow."

I conquered his good graces by giving him twenty sous to buy a liter of wine with, and we did well in not being on bad terms with him, for the rest of our quarters—composed in part of attorneys of the Rue Maubuée—were well disposed to pick a quarrel with us.

One night, among others, the 15th of August, Francis Emonot threatened to box the ears of two men who had taken his towel. There was a formidable hubbub in the dormitory. Insults rained, we were treated to "roule-en-coule et de duchesses." Being two against nineteen, we were in a fair way of getting a regular drubbing, when the bugler interfered, took aside the most desperate and coaxed them into giving up the stolen object. To celebrate the reconciliation which followed this scene, Francis and I contributed three francs each, and it was arranged that the bugler with the aid of his comrades should try to slip out of the hospital and bring back some meat and wine.

The light had disappeared from the major's window, the druggist at last extinguished his, we climb over the thicket, examine our surroundings, caution the men who are gliding along the walls not to encounter the sentinels on the way, mount on one another's shoulders and jump off into the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

field. An hour later they came back laden with victuals; they pass them over and reenter the dormitory with us; we suppress the two night lamps, light candle-ends stuck on the floor, and around my bed in our shirts we form a circle. We had absorbed three or four liters of wine and cut up the best part of a leg of mutton, when a great clattering of shoes is heard; I blow out the candle stubbs, by the grace of my shoe, and every one escapes under the beds. The door opens; the major appears, heaves a formidable "Good Heavens!" stumbles in the darkness, goes out and comes back with a lantern and the inevitable train of nurses. I profit by the moment to disperse the remains of the feast; the major crosses the dormitory at a quick step, swearing, threatening to take us all into custody and to put us in stocks.

We are convulsed with laughter under our coverings; a trumpet-flourish blazes from the other side of the dormitory. The major puts us all under diet; then he goes out, warning us that we shall know in a few minutes what metal he is made of.

Once gone, we vie with each other in doing our worst; flashes of laughter rumble and crackle. The trumpeter does a handspring in the dormitory, one of his friends joins him, a third jumps on his bed as on a springboard and bounces up and down, his arms balancing, his shirt flying; his neighbor breaks into a triumphant cancan;

SAC-AU-DOS

the major enters abruptly, orders four men of the line he has brought with him to seize the dancers, and announces to us that he is going to draw up a report and send it to whom it may concern.

Calm is restored at last; the next day we get the nurses to buy us some eatables. The days run on without further incident. We are beginning to perish of ennui in this hospital, when, one day, at five o'clock, the doctor bursts into the room and orders us to put on our campaign clothes and to buckle on our knapsacks.

We learn ten minutes later that the Prussians are marching on Chalons.

A gloomy amazement reigns in the quarters. Until now we have had no doubts as to the outcome of passing events. We knew about the too celebrated victory of Sarrebrück, we do not expect the reverses which overwhelm us. The major examines every man; not one is cured, all had been too long gorged with licorice water and deprived of care. Nevertheless, he returns to their corps the least sick, he orders others to lie down completely dressed, knapsack in readiness. Francis and I are among these last. The day passes, the night passes. Nothing. But I have the colic continually and suffer. At last, at about nine o'clock in the morning, appears a long train of mules with "cacolets,"⁵ and led by "trin-

⁵ Panier seats used in the French army to transport the wounded.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

glots.”⁶ We climb two by two into the baskets. Francis and I were lifted onto the same mule, only, as the painter was very fat and I very lean, the arrangement see-sawed; I go up in the air while he descends under the belly of the mule, who, dragged by the head, and pushed from behind, dances and flings about furiously. We trot along in a whirlwind of dust, blinded, bewildered, jolted, we cling to the bar of the cacolet, shut our eyes, laugh and groan. We arrive at Chalons more dead than alive; we fall to the gravel like jaded cattle, then they pack us into the cars and we leave Chalons to go—where? No one knows.

It is night; we fly over the rails. The sick are taken from the cars and walked up and down the platforms. The engine whistles, slows down and stops in a railway station—that of Reims, I suppose, but I can not be sure. We are dying of hunger, the commissary forgot but one thing; to give us bread for the journey. I get out. I see an open buffet. I run for it, but others are there before me. They are fighting as I come up. Some were seizing bottles, others meat, some bread, some cigars. Half-dazed but furious, the restaurant-keeper defends his shop at the point of a spit. Crowded by their comrades, who come up in gangs, the front row of militia throw themselves onto the counter, which gives way, carrying in its wake the owner of the buffet and

⁶ Tringlots are the soldiers detailed for this duty.

SAC-AU-DOS

his waiters. Then followed a regular pillage; everything went, from matches to toothpicks. Meanwhile the bell rings and the train starts. Not one of us disturbs himself, and while sitting on the walk, I explain to the painter how the tubes work, the mechanism of the bell. The train backs down over the rails to take us aboard. We ascend into our compartments again and we pass in review the booty we had seized. To tell the truth, there was little variety of food. Pork-butcher's meat and nothing but pork-butcher's meat! We had six strings of Bologna sausages flavored with garlic, a scarlet tongue, two sausages, a superb slice of Italian sausage, a slice in silver stripe, the meat all of an angry red, mottled white; four liters of wine, a half-bottle of cognac, and a few candle ends. We stick the candle ends into the neck of our flasks, which swing, hung by strings to the sides of the wagon. There was, thus, when the train jolted over a switch, a rain of hot grease which congealed almost instantly into great platters, but our coats had seen many another.

We began our repast at once, interrupted by the going and coming of those of the militia who kept running along the footboards the whole length of the train, and knocked at our window-panes and demanded something to drink. We sang at the top of our voices, we drank, we clinked glasses. Never did sick men make so much noise or romp so on a train in motion!

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

One would have said that it was a rolling Court of Miracles; the cripples jumped with jointed legs, those whose intestines were burning soaked them in bumpers of cognac, the one-eyed opened their eyes, the fevered capered about, the sick throats bellowed and tippled; it was unheard of!

This disturbance ends in calming itself. I profit by the lull to put my nose out of the window. There was not a star there, not even a tip of the moon; heaven and earth seem to make but one, and in that intensity, of inky blackness, the lanterns winked like eyes of different colors attached to the metal of the disks. The engineer discharged his whistle, the engine puffed and vomited its sparks without rest. I reclose the window and look at my companions. Some were snoring, others disturbed by the jolting of the box, gurgled and swore in their sleep, turning over incessantly, searching for room to stretch their legs, to brace their heads that nodded at every jolt.

By dint of looking at them, I was beginning to get sleepy when the train stopped short and woke me up. We were at a station; and the station-master's office flamed like a forge fire in the darkness of the night. I had one leg numbed, I was shivering from cold, I descend to warm up a bit. I walk up and down the platform, I go to look at the engine, which they uncouple, and which they replace by another, and walking by the office I hear the bills and the tic-tac of the tele-

SAC-AU-DOS

graph. The employee, with back turned to me, was stooping a little to the right in such a way that from where I was placed, I could see but the back of his head and the tip of his nose, which shone red and beaded with sweat, while the rest of his figure disappeared in the shadow thrown by the screen of a gas-jet.

They invite me to get back into the carriage, and I find my comrades again, just as I had left them. That time I went to sleep for good. For how long did my sleep last? I don't know—when a great cry woke me up: "Paris! Paris!" I made a dash for the doorway. At a distance, against a band of pale gold, stood out in black the smokestacks of factories and workshops. We were at Saint-Denis; the news ran from car to car. Every one was on his feet. The engine quickened its pace. The Gare du Nord looms up in the distance. We arrive there, we get down, we throw ourselves at the gates. One part of us succeeds in escaping, the others are stopped by the employees of the railroad and by the troops; by force they make us remount into a train that is getting up steam, and here we are again, off for God knows where!

We roll onward again all day long. I am weary of looking at the rows of houses and trees that spin by before my eyes; then, too, I have the colic continually and I suffer. About four o'clock of the afternoon, the engine slackens its speed, and stops at a landing-stage where awaits

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

us there an old general, around whom sports a flock of young men, with headgear of red képis, breached in red and shod with boots with yellow spurs. The general passes us in review and divides us into two squads; the one for the seminary, the other is directed toward the hospital. We are, it seems, at Arras. Francis and we form part of the first squad. They tumble us into carts stuffed with straw, and we arrive in front of a great building that settles and seems about to collapse into the street. We mount to the second story to a room that contains some thirty beds; each one of us unbuckles his knapsack, combs himself, and sits down. A doctor arrives.

"What is the trouble with you?" he asks of the first.

"A carbuncle."

"Ah! and you?"

"Dysentery."

"Ah! and you?"

"A bubo."

"But in that case you have not been wounded during the war?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Very well! You can take up your knapsacks again. The archbishop gives up the beds of his seminarists only to the wounded."

I pack into my knapsack again all the knick-knacks that I had taken out, and we are off again, willy-nilly, for the city hospital. There

SAC-AU-DOS

was no more room there. In vain the sisters contrive to squeeze the iron beds together, the wards are full. Worn out by all these delays, I seize one mattress, Francis takes another, and we go and stretch ourselves in the garden on a great glass-plot.

The next day I have a talk with the director, an affable and charming man. I ask permission for the painter and for me to go out into the town. He consents; the door opens; we are free! We are going to dine at last! To eat real meat, to drink real wine! Ah, we do not hesitate; we make straight for the best hotel in town. They serve us there with a wholesome meal. There are flowers there on the table, magnificent bouquets of roses and fuchias that spread themselves out of the glass vases. The waiter brings in a roast that drains into a lake of butter; the sun himself comes to the feast, makes the covers sparkle and the blades of the knives, sifts his golden dust through the carafes, and playing with the pomard that gently rocks in the glasses, spots with a ruby star the damask cloth.

Oh, sacred joy of the guzzlers! My mouth is full and Francis is drunk! The fumes of the roast mingle with the perfume of the flowers; the purple of the wine vies in gorgeousness with the red of the roses. The waiter who serves us has the air of folly and we have the air of gluttons, it is all the same to us! We stuff down roast after roast, we pour down bordeaux upon bur-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

gundy, chartreuse upon cognac. To the devil with your weak wines and your thirty-sixes,⁷ which we have been drinking since our departure from Paris! To the devil with those whimsicalities without name, those mysterious pot-house poisons with which we have been so crammed to leanness for nearly a month! We are unrecognizable; our once peaked faces redden like a drunkard's, we get noisy, with noise in the air we cut loose. We run all over the town that way.

Evening arrives; we must go back, however. The sister who is in charge of the old men's ward says to us in a small flute-like voice:

"Soldiers, gentlemen, you were very cold last night, but you are going to have a good bed."

And she leads us into a great room where three night lamps, dimly lighted, hang from the ceiling. I have a white bed, I sink with delight between the sheets that still smell fresh with the odor of washing. We hear nothing but the breathing or the snoring of the sleepers. I am quite warm, my eyes close, I know no longer where I am, when a prolonged chuckling awakes me. I open one eye and I perceive at the foot of my bed an individual who is looking down at me. I sit up in bed. I see before me an old man, tall, lean, his eyes haggard, lips slobbering into a rough beard. I ask what he wants of me. No answer! I cry out: "Go away! Let me sleep!"

⁷ Brandy of thirty-six degrees.

SAC-AU-DOS

He shows me his fist. I suspect him to be a lunatic. I roll up my towel, at the end of which I quietly twist a knot; he advances one step; I leap to the floor; I parry the fisticuff he aims at me, and with the towel I deal him a return blow full in the left eye. He sees thirty candles, he throws himself at me; I draw back and let fly a vigorous kick in the stomach. He tumbles, carrying with him a chair that rebounds; the dormitory is awakened; Francis runs up in his shirt to lend me assistance; the sister arrives; the nurses dart upon the madman, whom they flog and succeed with great difficulty in putting in bed again. The aspect of the dormitory was eminently ludicrous; to the gloom of faded rose, which the dying night lamps had spread around them, succeeded the flaming of three lanterns. The black ceiling, with its rings of light that danced above the burning wicks, glittered now with its tints of freshly spread plaster. The sick men, a collection of Punch and Judies without age, had clutched the piece of wood that hung at the end of a cord above their beds, hung on to it with one hand, and with the other made gestures of terror. At that sight my anger cools, I split with laughter, the painter suffocates, it is only the sister who preserves her gravity and succeeds by force of threats and entreaties in restoring order in the room.

Night came to an end, for good or ill; in the morning at six o'clock the rattle of a drum as-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

sembled us, the director called off the roll. We start for Rouen. Arrived in that city, an officer tells the unfortunate man in charge of us that the hospital is full and can not take us in. Meanwhile we have an hour to wait. I throw my knapsack down into a corner of the station, and though my stomach is on fire, we are off, Francis and I, wandering at random, in ecstasies before the church of Saint-Ouen, in wonder before the old houses. We admire so much and so long that the hour had long since passed before we even thought of looking for the station again. "It's a long time since your comrades departed," one of the employees of the railroad said to us; "they are in Evreux." The devil! The next train doesn't go until nine o'clock—Come, let's get some dinner!"

When we arrived at Evreux, midnight had come. We could not present ourselves at a hospital at such an hour; we would have the appearance of malefactors. The night is superb, we cross the city and we find ourselves in the open fields. It was the time of haying, the piles were in stacks. We spy out a little stack in a field, we hollow out there two comfortable nests, and I do not know whether it is the reminiscent odor of our couch or the penetrating perfume of the woods that stirs us, but we feel the need of airing our defunct love affairs. The subject was inexhaustible. Little by little, however, words become fewer, enthusiasm dies out, we fall asleep.

SAC-AU-DOS

"Sacre bleu!" cries my neighbor, as he stretches himself. "What time can it be?" I awake in turn. The sun will not be late in rising, for the great blue curtain is laced at the horizon with a fringe of rose. What misery! It will be necessary now to go knock at the door of the hospital, to sleep in wards impregnated with that heavy smell through which returns, like an obstinate refrain, the acrid flower of powder of iodoform! All sadly we take our way to the hospital again. They open to us but alas! one only of us is admitted, Francis—and I, they send me on to the lyceum. This life is no longer possible, I meditate an escape, the house surgeon on duty comes down into the courtyard. I show him my law-school diploma; he knows Paris, the Latin Quarter. I explain to him my situation. "It has come to an absolute necessity." I tell him "that either Francis comes to the lyceum or that I go to rejoin him at the hospital." He thinks it over, and in the evening, coming close to my bed, he slips these words into my ear: "Tell them tomorrow morning that your sufferings increase." The next day, in fact, at about seven o'clock, the doctor makes his appearance; a good, an excellent man, who had but two faults; that of odorous teeth and that of desiring to get rid of his patients at any cost. Every morning the following scene took place:

"Ah, ha! the fine fellow," he cries, "what an air he has! good color, no fever. Get up and go

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

take a good cup of coffee; but no fooling, you know! don't go running after the girls; I will sign for you your *Exeat*; you will return to-morrow to your regiment."

Sick or not sick, he sent back three a day. That morning he stops in front of me and says:

"Ah! saperlotte, my boy, you look better!"

I exclaim that never have I suffered so much.

He sounds my stomach. "But you are better," he murmurs; "the stomach is not so hard." I protest—he seems astonished, the interne then says to him in an undertone:

"We ought perhaps to give him an injection; and we have here neither syringe nor stomach-pump; if we send him to the hospital—?"

"Come, now, that's an idea!" says the good man, delighted at getting rid of me, and then and there he signs the order for my admission. Joyfully I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of one of the servants of the lyceum I make my entrance at the hospital. I find Francis again! By incredible good luck the St. Vincent corridor, where he sleeps, in default of a room in the wards, contains one empty bed next to his. We are at last reunited! In addition to our two beds, five cots stretch, one after the other, along the yellow glazed walls. For occupants they have a soldier of the line, two artillerymen, a dragoon, and a hussar. The rest of the hospital is made up of certain old men, crack-brained and weak-bodied, some young men, rickety or bandy-

SAC-AU-DOS

legged, and a great number of soldiers—wrecks from MacMahon's army—who, after being floated on from one military hospital to another, had come to be stranded on this bank. Francis and I, we are the only ones who wear the uniform of the Seine militia; our bed neighbors were good enough fellows; one, to tell the truth, quite as insignificant as another; they were, for the most part, the sons of peasants or farmers called to serve under the flag after the declaration of war.

While I am taking off my vest, there comes a sister, so frail, so pretty that I can not keep from looking at her; the beautiful big eyes! the long blond lashes! the pretty teeth! She asks me why I have left the lyceum; I explain to her in round-about phrases how the absence of a forcing pump caused me to be sent back from the college. She smiles gently and says to me: "Ah, sir soldier, you could have called the thing by its name; we are used to everything." I should think she was used to everything, unfortunate woman, for the soldiers constrained themselves but little in delivering themselves of their indiscreet amenities before her. Yet never did I see her blush. She passed among them mute, her eyes lowered, seeming not to hear the coarse jokes retailed around her.

Heavens! how she spoiled me! I see her now in the morning, as the sun breaks on the stone floor the shadows of the window bars, approaching slowly from the far end of the corridor, the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

great wings of her bonnet flapping at her face. She comes close to my bed with a dish that smokes, and on the edge of which glistens her well-trimmed finger nail. "The soup is a little thin to-day," she says with her pretty smile, "so I bring you some chocolate. Eat it quick while it's hot!"

In spite of the care she lavished upon me, I was bored to death in that hospital. My friend and I, we had reached that degree of brutishness that throws you on your bed, trying to kill in animal drowsiness the long hours of insupportable days. The only distractions offered us consisted in a breakfast and a dinner composed of boiled beef, watermelon, prunes, and a finger of wine—the whole of not sufficient quantity to nourish a man.

Thanks to my ordinary politeness toward the sisters and to the prescription labels that I wrote for them, I obtained fortunately a cutlet now and then and a pear picked in the hospital orchard. I was, then, on the whole, the least to be pitied of all the soldiers packed together, pell-mell, in the wards, but during the first days I could not succeed even in swallowing the meagre morning dole. It was inspection hour, and the doctor chose that moment to perform his operations. The second day after my arrival he ripped a thigh open from top to bottom; I heard a piercing cry; I closed my eyes, not enough, however, to avoid seeing a red stream spurt in great jets

SAC-AU-DOS

on to the doctor's apron. That morning I could eat no more. Little by little, however, I grew accustomed to it; soon I contented myself by merely turning my head away and keeping my soup.

In the mean while the situation became intolerable. We tried, but in vain, to procure newspapers and books; we were reduced to masquerading, to donning the hussar's vest for fun. This puerile fooling quickly wore itself out, and stretching ourselves every twenty minutes, exchanging a few words, we dive our heads into the bolsters.

There was not much conversation to be drawn from our comrades. The two artillerymen and the hussar were too sick to talk. The dragoon swore by the name of heaven, saying nothing, got up every instant, enveloped in his great white mantle, and went to the wash-bowls, whose sloppy condition he reported by means of his bare feet. There were some old saucepans lying about in which the convalescents pretended to cook, offering their stew in jest to the sisters.

There remained, then, only the soldier of the line: an unfortunate grocer's clerk, father of a child, called to the army, stricken constantly by fever, shivering under his bedclothes.

Squatting, tailor-fashion, on our bed, we listen to him recount the battle in which he was picked up. Cast out near Froeschwiller, on a plain surrounded with woods, he had seen the red flashes

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

shoot by in bouquets of white smoke, and he had ducked, trembling, bewildered by the cannonading, wild with the whistling of the balls. He had marched, mixed in with the regiments, through the thick mud, not seeing a single Prussian, not knowing in what direction they were, hearing on all sides groans, cut by sharp cries, then the ranks of the soldiers placed in front of him, all at once turned, and in the confusion of flight he had been, without knowing how, thrown to the ground. He had picked himself up and had fled, abandoning his gun and knapsack, and at last, worn out by the forced marches endured for eight days, undermined by fear, weakened by hunger, he had rested himself in a trench. He had remained there dazed, inert, stunned by the roar of the bombs, resolved no longer to defend himself, to move no more; then he thought of his wife, and, weeping, demanded what he had done that they should make him suffer so; he picked up, without knowing why, the leaf of a tree, which he kept, and which he had about him now, for he showed it to us often, dried and shriveled at the bottom of his pockets.

An officer had passed meanwhile, revolver in hand, had called him "coward," and threatened to break his head if he did not march. He had replied: "That would please me above all things. Oh, that this would end!" But the officer at the very moment he was shaking him on to his feet was stretched out, the blood bursting, spurting

SAC-AU-DOS

from his neck. Then fear took possession of him; he fled and succeeded in reaching a road far off, overrun with the flying, black with troops, furrowed by gun-carriages whose dying horses broke and crushed the ranks.

They succeeded at last in putting themselves under shelter. The cry of treason arose from the groups. Old soldiers seemed once more resolved, but the recruits refused to go on. "Let them go and be killed," they said, indicating the officers; "that's their profession. As for me I have children; it's not the State that will take care of them if I die!" And they envied the fate of those who were slightly wounded and the sick who were allowed to take refuge in the ambulances.

"Ah, how afraid one gets, and, then, how one holds in the ear the voices of men calling for their mothers and begging for something to drink," he added, shivering all over. He paused, and, looking about the corridor with an air of content, he continued: "It's all the same, I am very happy to be here; and then, as it is, my wife can write to me," and he drew from his trousers pocket some letters, saying with satisfaction: "The little one has written, look!" and he points out at the foot of the paper under his wife's labored handwriting, some up-and-down strokes forming a dictated sentence, where there were some "I kiss papas" in blots of ink.

We listened twenty times at least to that story, and we had to suffer during mortal hours the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

repetitions of that man, delighted at having a child. We ended by stopping our ears and by trying to sleep so as not to hear him any more.

This deplorable life threatened to prolong itself, when one morning Francis, who, contrary to his habit, had been prowling around the whole of the evening before in the courtyard, says to me: "I say, Eugène, come out and breathe a little of the air of the fields." I prick my ears. "There is a field reserved for lunatics," he continued; "that field is empty; by climbing onto the roofs of the outhouses, and that is easy, thanks to the gratings that ornament the windows, we can reach the coping of the wall; we jump and we tumble into the country. Two steps from the wall is one of the gates of Evreux. What do you say?"

I say—I say that I am quite willing to go out, but how shall we get back?

"I do not know anything about that; first let us get out, we will plan afterward. Come, get up, they are going to serve the soup; we jump the wall after."

I get up. The hospital lacked water, so much so that I was reduced to washing in the seltzer water which the sister had had sent to me. I take my siphon, I mark the painter who cries fire, I press the trigger, the discharge hits him full in his face; then I place myself in front of him, I receive the stream in my beard, I rub my nose with the lather, I dry my face. We are ready,

SAC-AU-DOS

we go downstairs. The field is deserted; we scale the wall; Francis takes his measure and jumps. I am sitting astride the coping of the wall, I cast a rapid glance around me; below, a ditch and some grass, on the right one of the gates of the town; in the distance, a forest that sways and shows its rents of golden red against a band of pale blue. I stand up; I hear a noise in the court; I jump; we skirt the walls; we are in Evreux!

Shall we eat? Motion adopted.

Making our way in search of a resting-place, we perceive two little women wagging along. We follow them and offer to breakfast with them; they refuse; we insist; they answer no less gently; we insist again; they say yes. We go home with them, with a meat-pie, bottles of wine, eggs, and a cold chicken. It seems odd to us to find ourselves in a light room hung with paper spotted with lilac blossoms and green leaves; there are at the casements damask curtains of red currant color, a mirror over the fireplace, an engraving representing a Christ tormented by the Pharisees. Six chairs of cherry wood and a round table with an oilcloth showing the kings of France, a bedspread with eiderdown of pink muslin. We set the table, we look with greedy eye at the girls moving about. It takes a long time to get things ready, for we stop them for a kiss in passing; for the rest, they are ugly and stupid enough. But what is that to us? It's

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

so long since we have scented the mouth of woman!

I carve the chicken; the corks fly, we drink like toppers, we eat like ogres. The coffee steams in the cups; we gild it with cognac; my melancholy flies away, the punch kindles, the blue flames of the Kirschwasser leap in the salad bowl, the girls giggle, their hair in their eyes. Suddenly four strokes ring out slowly from the church tower. It is four o'clock. And the hospital! Good heavens, we had forgotten it! I turn pale. Francis looks at me in fright, we tear ourselves from the arms of our hostesses, we go out at double quick.

"How to get in?" says the painter.

Alas! we have no choice; we shall get there scarcely in time for supper. Let's trust to the mercy of heaven and make for the great gate!

We get there; we ring; the sister concierge is about to open the door for us and stands amazed. We salute her, and I say loud enough to be heard by her:

"I say, do you know, they are not very amiable at that commissariat; the fat one specially received us only more or less civilly."

The sister breathes not a word. We run at a gallop for the messroom; it was time, I heard the voice of Sister Angèle who was distributing the rations. I went to bed as quickly as possible, I covered with my hand a spot my beauty had given me the length of my neck; the sister looks

SAC-AU-DOS

at me, finds in my eyes an unwonted sparkle, and asks with interest: "Are your pains worse?"

I reassure her and reply: "On the contrary, sister, I am better; but this idleness and this imprisonment are killing me."

When I speak of the appalling ennui that is trying me, sunk in this company, in the midst of the country, far from my own people, she does not reply, but her lips close tight, her eyes take on an indefinable expression of melancholy and of pity. One day she said to me in a dry tone: "Oh, liberty's worth nothing to you," alluding to a conversation she had overheard between Francis and me, discussing the charming allurements of Parisian women; then she softened and added with her fascinating little moue: "You are really not serious, Mr. Soldier."

The next morning we agreed, the painter and I, that as soon as the soup was swallowed, we would scale the wall again. At the time appointed we prowl about the field; the door is closed. "Bast, worse luck!" says Francis, "*En avant!*" and he turns toward the great door of the hospital. I follow him. The sister in charge asks where we are going. "To the commissariat." The door opens, we are outside.

Arrived at the grand square of the town, in front of the church, I perceive, as we contemplate the sculptures of the porch, a stout gentleman with a face like a red moon bristling with white mustaches, who stares at us in astonish-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ment. We stare back at him, boldly, and continue on our way. Francis is dying of thirst; we enter a café, and, while sipping my demi-tasse, I cast my eyes over the local paper, and I find there a name that sets me dreaming. I did not know, to tell the truth, the person who bore it, but that name recalled to me memories long since effaced. I remembered that one of my friends had a relation in a very high position in the town of Evreux. "It is absolutely necessary for me to see him," I say to the painter; I ask his address of the café-keeper; he does not know it; I go out and visit all the bakers and the druggists that I meet with. Every one eats bread and takes medicine; it is impossible that one of those manufacturers should not know the address of Monsieur de Fréchédé. I did find it there, in fact; I dust off my blouse, I buy a black cravat, gloves, and I go and ring gently, in the Rue Chatrain, at the iron grating of a private residence which rears its brick facade and slate roofs in the clearing of a sunny park. A servant lets me in. Monsieur de Fréchédé is absent, but Madame is at home. I wait for a few seconds in a salon; the portière is raised and an old lady appears. She has an air so affable that I am reassured. I explain to her in a few words who I am.

"Sir," she says with a kind smile, "I have often heard speak of your family. I think, even, that I have met at Madame Lezant's, madame, your

SAC-AU-DOS

mother, during my last journey to Paris; you are welcome here."

We talked a long time; I, somewhat embarrassed, covering with my képi the spot on my neck; she trying to persuade me to accept some money, which I refuse.

She says to me at last: "I desire with all my heart to be useful to you. What can I do?" I reply: "Heavens, Madame, if you could get them to send me back to Paris, you would render me a great service; communications will be interrupted very soon, if the newspapers are to be believed; they talk of another *coup d'état*, or the overthrow of the Empire; I have great need of seeing my mother again; and especially of not letting myself be taken prisoner here if the Prussians come."

In the mean while Monsieur de Fréchédé enters. In two words he is made acquainted with the situation.

"If you wish to come with me to the doctor of the hospital," he says, "you have no time to lose."

To the doctor! Good heavens! and how account to him for my absence from the hospital? I dare not breathe a word; I follow my protector, asking myself how it will all end. We arrive; the doctor looks at me with a stupefied air. I do not give him time to open his mouth, and I deliver with prodigious volubility a string of jeremiads over my sad position.

Monsieur de Fréchédé in his turn takes up the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

argument, and asks him, in my favor, to give me a convalescent's leave of absence for two months.

"Monsieur is, in fact, sick enough," says the doctor, to be entitled to two months' rest; if my colleagues and if the General look at it as I do your protégé will be able in a few days to return to Paris."

"That's good," replies Monsieur de Fréchédé. "I thank you, doctor; I will speak to the General myself to-night."

We are in the street; I heave a great sigh of relief; I press the hand of that excellent man who shows so kindly an interest in me. I run to find Francis again. We have but just time to get back; we arrive at the gate of the hospital; Francis rings; I salute the sister. She stops me: "Did you not tell me this morning that you were going to the commissariat?"

"Quite right, sister."

"Very well! the General has just left here. Go and see the director and Sister Angèle; they are waiting for you; you will explain to them, no doubt, the object of your visits to the commissariat."

We remount, all crestfallen, the dormitory stairs. Sister Angèle is there, who waits for us, and who says:

"Never could I have believed such a thing! You have been all over the city, yesterday and to-day, and Heaven knows what kind of life you have been leading!"

SAC-AU-DOS

"Oh, really!" I exclaim.

She looked at me so fixedly that I breathed not another word.

"All the same," she continued, "the General himself met you on the Grand Square to-day. I denied that you had gone out, and I searched for you all over the hospital. The General was right, you were not here. He asked me for your names; I gave him the name of one of you, I refused to reveal the other, and I did wrong, that is certain, for you do not deserve it!"

"Oh, how much I thank you, my sister!" But Sister Angèle did not listen to me. She was indignant over my conduct! There was but one thing to do; keep quiet and accept the downpour without trying to shelter myself.

In the mean time Francis was summoned before the director, and since, I do not know why, they suspected him of corrupting me; and since he was, moreover, by reason of his foolery, in bad odor with the doctor and the sisters, he was informed that he must leave the hospital the following day and join his corps at once.

"Those huzzies with whom we dined yesterday are licensed women, who have sold us; it was the director himself who told me," he declared furiously.

All the time we are cursing the jades and lamenting over our uniforms which made us so recognizable, the rumor runs that the Emperor is taken prisoner and that the Republic has been

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

proclaimed at Paris; I give a franc to an old man who was allowed to go out and who brings me a copy of the "Gaulois." The news is true. The hospital exults. Badinguet fallen! it is not too soon; good-by to the war that is ended at last.

The following morning Francis and I, we embrace and he departs. "Till we meet again," he shouts to me as he shuts the gate; "and in Paris!"

Oh, the days that followed that day! What suffering! what desolation! Impossible to leave the hospital; a sentinel paced up and down, in my honor, before the door. I had, however, spirit enough not to try to sleep. I paced like a caged beast in the yard. I prowled thus for the space of twelve hours. I knew my prison to its smallest cranny. I knew the spots where the lichens and the mosses pushed up through the sections of the wall which had given way in cracking. Disgust for my corridor, for my truckle-bed flattened out like a pancake, for my linen rotten with dirt, took hold of me. I lived isolated, speaking to no one, beating the flint stones of the courtyard with my feet, straying, like a troubled soul, under the arcades white-washed with yellow ochre the same as the wards, coming back to the grated entrance gate surmounted by a flag, mounting to the first floor where my bed was, descending to where the kitchen shone, flashing the sparkle of its red copper through the bare nakedness of the scene. I gnawed my fists with impatience, watching at

SAC-AU-DOS

certain hours the mingled coming and going of civilians and soldiers, passing and repassing on every floor, filling the galleries with their interminable march.

I had no longer any strength left to resist the persecution of the sisters, who drove us on Sunday into the chapel. I became a monomaniac; one fixed idea haunted me; to flee as quickly as possible that lamentable jail. With that, money worry oppressed me. My mother had forwarded a hundred francs to me at Dunkirk, where it seems I ought to be. The money never appeared. I saw the time when I should not have a sou to buy either paper or tobacco.

Meanwhile the days passed. The De Fréchédés seemed to have forgotten me, and I attributed their silence to my escapades, of which they had no doubt been informed. Soon to all these anxieties were added horrible pains: ill-cared for and aggravated by my chase after petticoats, my bowels became inflamed. I suffered so that I came to fear I should no longer be able to bear the journey. I concealed my sufferings, fearing the doctor would force me to stay longer at the hospital. I keep my bed for a few days; then, as I felt my strength diminishing, I wished to get up, in spite of all, and I went downstairs into the yard. Sister Angèle no longer spoke to me, and in the evening, while she made her rounds in the corridor and in the mess, turning so as not to notice the sparks of the forbidden pipes that

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

glowed in the shadows, she passed before me, indifferent, cold, turning away her eyes. One morning, however, when I had dragged myself into the courtyard and sunk down on every bench to rest, she saw me so changed, so pale, that she could not keep from a movement of compassion. In the evening, after she had finished her visit to the dormitories, I was leaning with one elbow on my bolster, and, with eyes wide open, I was looking at the bluish beams which the moon cast through the windows of the corridor, when the door at the farther end opened again, and I saw, now bathed in silver vapor, now in shadow, and as if clothed in black crepe, according as to whether she passed before the casements or along the walls, Sister Angèle, who was coming toward me. She was smiling gently. "To-morrow morning," she said to me, "you are to be examined by the doctors. I saw Madame de Fréchêdé to-day; it is probable that you will start for Paris in two or three days." I spring up in my bed, my face brightens, I wanted to jump and sing; never was I happier. Morning rises. I dress, and uneasy, nevertheless, I direct my way to the room where sits a board of officers and doctors.

One by one the soldiers exhibit their bodies gouged with wounds or bunched with hair. The General scraped one of his finger nails, the Colonel of the Gendarmerie⁸ fans himself with

⁸ Armed police.

SAC-AU-DOS

a newspaper; the practitioners talk among themselves as they feel the men. My turn comes at last. They examine me from head to foot, they press down on my stomach, swollen and tense like a balloon, and with a unanimity of opinion the council grants me a convalescent's leave of sixty days.

I am going at last to see my mother, to recover my curios, my books! I feel no more the red-hot iron that burns my entrails; I leap like a kid!

I announce to my family the good news. My mother writes me letter after letter, wondering why I do not come. Alas! my order of absence must be countersigned at the division headquarters at Rouen. It comes back after five days; I am "in order"; I go to find Sister Angèle; I beg her to obtain for me before the time fixed for my departure permission to go into the city to thank De Fréchédé, who have been so good to me. She goes to look for the director and brings me back permission. I run to the house of those kind people, who force me to accept a silk handkerchief and fifty francs for the journey. I go in search of my papers at the commissariat. I return to the hospital, I have but a few minutes to spare. I go in quest of Sister Angèle, whom I find in the garden, and I say to her with great emotion:

"Oh, dear Sister, I am leaving; how can I ever repay you for all that you have done for me?"

I take her hand which she tries to withdraw,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

and I carry it to my lips. She grows red. "Adieu!" she murmurs, and, menacing me with her finger, she adds playfully, "Be good! and above all do not make any wicked acquaintances on the journey."

"Oh, do not fear, my Sister. I promise you!"

The hour strikes; the door opens; I hurry off to the station; I jump into a car; the train moves; I have left Evreux. The coach is half full, but I occupy, fortunately, one of the corners. I put my nose out of the window; I see some pollarded trees, the tops of a few hills that undulate away into the distance, a bridge astride of a great pond that sparkles in the sun like burnished glass. All this is not very pleasing. I sink back in my corner, looking now and then at the telegraph wires that stripe the ultramarine sky with their black lines, when the train stops, the travellers who are about me descend, the door shuts, then opens again and makes way for a young woman. While she seats herself and arranges her dress, I catch a glimpse of her face under the displacing of her veil. She is charming; with her eyes full of the blue of heaven, her lips stained with purple, her white teeth, her hair the color of ripe corn. I engage her in conversation. She is called Reine; embroiders flowers; we chat like old friends. Suddenly she turns pale, and is about to faint. I open the windows, I offer her a bottle of salts which I have carried with me ever since

SAC-AU-DOS

my departure from Paris; she thanks me, it is nothing, she says, and she leans on my knapsack and tries to sleep. Fortunately we are alone in the compartment, but the wooden partition that divides into equal parts the body of the carriage comes up only as far as the waist, and one can see and above all hear the clamor and the coarse laughter of the country men and women. I could have thrashed them with hearty good will, these imbeciles who were troubling her sleep! I contented myself with listening to the commonplace opinions which they exchanged on politics. I soon have enough of it; I stop my ears. I too, try to sleep; but that phrase which was spoken by the station-master of the last station, "You will not get to Paris, the rails are torn up at Mantes," returned in my dreams like an obstinate refrain. I open my eyes. My neighbor wakes up, too; I do not wish to share my fears with her; we talk in a low voice. She tells me that she is going to join her mother at Sèvres. "But," I say to her, "the train will scarcely enter Paris before eleven o'clock to-night. You will never have time to reach the landing on the left bank."

"What shall I do?" she says, "if my brother is not down at my arrival?"

Oh, misery, I am as dirty as a comb and my stomach burns! I can not dream of taking her to my bachelor lodgings, and then I wish before all to see my mother. What to do? I look at

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Reine with distress. I take her hand; at that moment the train takes a curve, the jerk throws her forward; our lips approach, they touch, I press mine; she turns red. Good heavens, her mouth moves imperceptibly; she returns my kiss; a long thrill runs up my spine; at contact of those ardent embers my senses fail. Oh! Sister Angèle, Sister Angèle! a man can not make himself over! And the train roars and rolls onward, without slackening speed; we are flying under full steam toward Mantes; my fears are vain; the track is clear. Reine half shuts her eyes; her head falls on my shoulder; her little waves of hair tangle with my beard and tickle my lips. I put my arm about her waist, which yields, and I rock her. Paris is not far; we pass the freight-depots, by the roundhouses where the engines roar in red vapor, getting up steam; the train stops; they take up the tickets. After reflection, I will take Reine to my bachelor rooms, provided her brother is not waiting her arrival. We descend from the carriage; her brother is there. "In five days," she says, with a kiss, and the pretty bird has flown. Five days after I was in my bed, atrociously sick, and the Prussians occupy Sèvres. Never since then have I seen her.

My heart is heavy. I heave a deep sigh; this is not, however, the time to be sad! I am jolting on in a fiacre. I recognize the neighborhood; I arrive before my mother's house; I dash up the steps, four at a time. I pull the bell violently;

SAC-AU-DOS

the maid opens the door. "It's Monsieur!" and she runs to tell my mother, who darts out to meet me, turns pale, embraces me, looks me over from head to foot, steps back a little, looks at me once more, and hugs me again. Meanwhile the servant has stripped the buffet. "You must be hungry, M. Eugène?" I should think I was hungry! I devour everything they give me. I toss off great glasses of wine; to tell the truth, I do not know what I am eating and what I am drinking!

At length I go to my rooms to rest. I find my lodging just as I left it. I run through it, radiant, then I sit down on the divan and I rest there, ecstatic, beatific, feasting my eyes with the view of my knickknacks and my books. I undress, however; I splash about in a great tub, rejoicing that for the first time in many months I am going to get into a clean bed with white feet and toenails trimmed. I spring onto the mattress, which rebounds. I dive my head into the feather pillow, my eyes close; I soar on full wings into the land of dreams.

I seem to see Francis, who is lighting his enormous wooden pipe, and Sister Angèle, who is contemplating me with her little moue; then Reine advances toward me, I awake with a start, I behave like an idiot, I sink back again up to my ears, but the pains in my bowels, calmed for a moment, awake, now that the nerves become less tense, and I rub my stomach gently, think-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ing that the horrors of dysentery are at last over! I am at home. I have my rooms to myself, and I say to myself that one must have lived in the promiscuity of hospitals and camps to appreciate the value of a basin of water, to appreciate the solitude where modesty may rest at ease.

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

BY A. T. QUILLER-COUCH ("Q.")

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

BY A. T. QUILLER-COUCH ("Q.")

"**Y**ES, sir," said my host, the quarryman, reaching down the relics from their hook in the wall over the chimneypiece; "they've hung here all my time, and most of my father's. The women won't touch 'em; they're afraid of the story. So here they'll dangle, and gather dust and smoke, till another tenant comes and tosses 'em out o' doors for rubbish. Whew! 'tis coarse weather, surely."

He went to the door, opened it, and stood studying the gale that beat upon his cottage-front, straight from the Manacle Reef. The rain drove past him into the kitchen, aslant like threads of gold silk in the shine of the wreck-wood fire. Meanwhile, by the same firelight, I examined the relics on my knee. The metal of each was tarnished out of knowledge. But the trumpet was evidently an old cavalry trumpet, and the threads of its party-colored sling, though fretted and dusty, still hung together. Around the side-drum, beneath its cracked brown varnish, I could hardly trace a royal coat-of-arms and a legend running, "Per Mare Per Terram"—the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

motto of the marines. Its parchment, though black and scented with wood-smoke, was limp and mildewed; and I began to tighten up the straps—under which the drumsticks had been loosely thrust—with the idle purpose of trying if some music might be got out of the old drum yet.

But as I turned it on my knee, I found the drum attached to the trumpet-sling by a curious barrel-shaped padlock, and paused to examine this. The body of the lock was composed of half a dozen brass rings, set accurately edge to edge; and, rubbing the brass with my thumb, I saw that each of the six had a series of letters engraved around it.

I knew the trick of it, I thought. Here was one of those word padlocks, once so common; only to be opened by getting the rings to spell a certain word, which the dealer confides to you.

My host shut and barred the door, and came back to the hearth.

“’Twas just such a wind—east by south—that brought in what you’ve got between your hands. Back in the year ’nine, it was; my father has told me the tale a score o’ times. You’re twisting round the rings, I see. But you’ll never guess the word. Parson Kendall, he made the word, and he locked down a couple o’ ghosts in their graves with it; and when his time came he went to his own grave and took the word with him.”

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

"Whose ghosts, Matthew?"

"You want the story, I see, sir. My father could tell it better than I can. He was a young man in the year 'nine, unmarried at the time, and living in this very cottage, just as I be. That's how he came to get mixed up with the tale."

He took a chair, lighted a short pipe, and went on, with his eyes fixed on the dancing violet flames:

"Yes, he'd ha' been about thirty year old in January, eighteen 'nine. The storm got up in the night o' the twenty-first o' that month. My father was dressed and out long before daylight; he never was one to bide in bed, let be that the gale by this time was pretty near lifting the thatch over his head. Besides which, he'd fenced a small 'taty-patch that winter, down by Lowland Point, and he wanted to see if it stood the night's work. He took the path across Gunner's Meadow—where they buried most of the bodies afterward. The wind was right in his teeth at the time, and once on the way (he's told me this often) a great strip of oarweed came flying through the darkness and fetched him a slap on the cheek like a cold hand. But he made shift pretty well till he got to Lowland, and then had to drop upon hands and knees and crawl, digging his fingers every now and then into the shingle to hold on, for he declared to me that the stones, some of them as big as a man's head, kept rolling and driving past till it seemed the whole fore-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

shore was moving westward under him. The fence was gone, of course; not a stick left to show where it stood; so that, when first he came to the place, he thought he must have missed his bearings. My father, sir, was a very religious man; and if he reckoned the end of the world was at hand—there in the great wind and night, among the moving stones—you may believe he was certain of it when he heard a gun fired, and, with the same, saw a flame shoot up out of the darkness to windward, making a sudden fierce light in all the place about. All he could find to think or say was, 'The Second Coming! The Second Coming! The Bridegroom cometh, and the wicked He will toss like a ball into a large country'; and being already upon his knees, he just bowed his head and 'bided, saying this over and over.

"But by'm by, between two squalls, he made bold to lift his head and look, and then by the light—a bluish color 'twas—he saw all the coast clear away to Manacle Point, and off the Manacles in the thick of the weather, a sloop-of-war with topgallants housed, driving stern foremost toward the reef. It was she, of course, that was burning the flare. My father could see the white streak and the ports of her quite plain as she rose to it, a little outside the breakers, and he guessed easy enough that her captain had just managed to wear ship and was trying to force her nose to the sea with the help of her small bower anchor

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

and the scrap or two of canvas that hadn't yet been blown out of her. But while he looked, she fell off, giving her broadside to it foot by foot, and drifting back on the breakers around Carn Du and the Varses. The rocks lie so thick thereabout that 'twas a toss up which she struck first; at any rate, my father could'n't tell at the time, for just then the flare died down and went out.

"Well, sir, he turned then in the dark and started back for Coverack to cry the dismal tidings—though well knowing ship and crew to be past any hope, and as he turned the wind lifted him and tossed him forward 'like a ball,' as he'd been saying, and homeward along the foreshore. As you know, 'tis ugly work, even by daylight, picking your way among the stones there, and my father was prettily knocked about at first in the dark. But by this 'twas nearer seven than six o'clock, and the day spreading. By the time he reached North Corner, a man could see to read print; hows'ever, he looked neither out to sea nor toward Coverack, but headed straight for the first cottage—the same that stands above North Corner to-day. A man named Billy Ede lived there then, and when my father burst into the kitchen bawling, 'Wreck! wreck!' he saw Billy Ede's wife, Ann, standing there in her clogs with a shawl over her head, and her clothes wringing wet.

"'Save the chap!' says Billy Ede's wife, Ann.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

'What d'ee mean by crying stale fish at that rate?'

"'But 'tis a wreck, I tell 'ee.'

"'Ive a-zeed 'n, too; and so has every one with an eye in his head.'

"And with that she pointed straight over my father's shoulder, and he turned; and there, close under Dolor Point, at the end of Coverack town, he saw another wreck washing, and the point black with people, like emmets, running to and fro in the morning light. While he stood staring at her, he heard a trumpet sounded on board, the notes coming in little jerks, like a bird rising against the wind; but faintly, of course, because of the distance and the gale blowing—though this had dropped a little.

"'She's a transport,' said Billy Ede's wife, Ann, 'and full of horse-soldiers, fine long men. When she struck they must ha' pitched the horses over first to lighten the ship, for a score of dead horses had washed in afore I left, half an hour back. An' three or four soldiers, too—fine long corpses in white breeches and jackets of blue and gold. I held the lantern to one. Such a straight young man!'

"My father asked her about the trumpeting.

"'That's the queerest bit of all. She was burnin' a light when me an' my man joined the crowd down there. All her masts had gone; whether they carried away, or were cut away to ease her, I don't rightly know. Her keelson was

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

broke under her and her bottom sagged and stove, and she had just settled down like a sitting hen—just the leastest list to starboard; but a man could stand there easy. They had rigged up ropes across her, from bulwark to bulwark, an' besides these the men were mustered, holding on like grim death whenever the sea made a clean breach over them, an' standing up like heroes as soon as it passed. The captain an' the officers were clinging to the rail of the quarterdeck, all in their golden uniforms, waiting for the end as if 'twas King George they expected. There was no way to help, for she lay right beyond cast of line, though our folk tried it fifty times. And beside them clung a trumpeter, a whacking big man, an' between the heavy seas he would lift his trumpet with one hand, and blow a call; and every time he blew the men gave a cheer. There [she says]—hark 'ee now—there he goes agen! But you won't hear no cheering any more, for few are left to cheer, and their voices weak. Bitter cold the wind is, and I reckon it numbs their grip o' the ropes, for they were dropping off fast with every sea when my man sent me home to get his breakfast. Another wreck, you say? Well, there's no hope for the tender dears, if 'tis the *Manacles*. You'd better run down and help yonder; though 'tis little help any man can give. Not one came in alive while I was there. The tide's flowing, an' she won't hold together another hour, they say.'

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

“Well, sure enough, the end was coming fast when my father got down to the point. Six men had been cast up alive, or just breathing—a seaman and five troopers. The seaman was the only one that had breath to speak; and while they were carrying him into the town, the word went round that the ship’s name was the ‘Despatch,’ transport, homeward-bound from Corunna, with a detachment of the Seventh Hussars, that had been fighting out there with Sir John Moore. The seas had rolled her further over by this time, and given her decks a pretty sharp slope; but a dozen men still held on, seven by the ropes near the ship’s waist, a couple near the break of the poop, and three on the quarterdeck. Of these three my father made out one to be the skipper; close by him clung an officer in full regimentals—his name, they heard after, was Captain Duncanfield; and last came the tall trumpeter; and if you’ll believe me, the fellow was making shift there, at the very last, to blow ‘God Save the King.’ What’s more, he got to ‘Send us victorious,’ before an extra big sea came bursting across and washed them off the deck—every man but one of the pair beneath the poop—and he dropped his hold before the next wave; being stunned, I reckon. The others went out of sight at once, but the trumpeter—being, as I said, a powerful man as well as a tough swimmer—rose like a duck, rode out a couple of breakers, and came in on the crest of the third. The folks

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

looked to see him broke like an egg at their very feet; but when the smother cleared, there he was, lying face downward on a ledge below them; and one of the men that happened to have a rope round him—I forgot the fellow's name, if I ever heard it—jumped down and grabbed him by the ankle as he began to slip back. Before the next big sea, the pair were hauled high enough to be out of harm, and another heave brought them up to grass. Quick work, but master trumpeter wasn't quite dead; nothing worse than a cracked head and three staved ribs. In twenty minutes or so they had him in bed, with the doctor to tend him.

“Now was the time—nothing being left alive upon the transport—for my father to tell of the sloop he'd seen driving upon the Manacles. And when he got a hearing, though the most were set upon salvage, and believed a wreck in the hand, so to say, to be worth half a dozen they couldn't see, a good few volunteered to start off with him and have a look. They crossed Lowland Point; no ship to be seen on the Manacles nor anywhere upon the sea. One or two was for calling my father a liar. ‘Wait till we come to Dean Point,’ said he. Sure enough, on the far side of Dean Pont they found the sloop's mainmast washing about with half a dozen men lashed to it, men in red jackets, every mother's son drowned and staring; and a little further on, just under the Dean, three or four bodies cast up on the shore,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

one of them a small drummer-boy, side-drum and all; and near by part of a ship's gig, with 'H.M.S. Primrose' cut on the stern-board. From this point on the shore was littered thick with wreckage and dead bodies—the most of them marines in uniform—and in Godrevy Cove, in particular, a heap of furniture from the captain's cabin, and among it a water-tight box, not much damaged, and full of papers, by which, when it came to be examined, next day, the wreck was easily made out to be the 'Primrose,' of eighteen guns, outward bound from Portsmouth, with a fleet of transports for the Spanish war—thirty sail, I've heard, but I've never heard what became of them. Being handled by merchant skippers, no doubt they rode out the gale, and reached the Tagus safe and sound. Not but what the captain of the 'Primrose'—Mein was his name—did quite right to try and club-haul his vessel when he found himself under the land; only he never ought to have got there, if he took proper soundings. But it's easy talking.

"The 'Primrose,' sir, was a handsome vessel—for her size one of the handsomest in the King's service—and newly fitted out at Plymouth Dock. So the boys had brave pickings from her in the way of brass-work, ship's instruments, and the like, let alone some barrels of stores not much spoiled. They loaded themselves with as much as they could carry, and started for home, meaning to make a second journey before the pre-

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

ventive men got wind of their doings, and came to spoil the fun. 'Hullo!' says my father, and dropped his gear, 'I do believe there's a leg moving?' and running fore, he stooped over the small drummer-boy that I told you about. The poor little chap was lying there, with his face a mass of bruises, and his eyes closed; but he had shifted one leg an inch or two, and was still breathing. So my father pulled out a knife, and cut him free from his drum—that was lashed on to him with a double turn of Manila rope—and took him up and carried him along here to this very room that we're sitting in. He lost a good deal by this; for when he went back to fetch the bundle he'd dropped, the preventive men had got hold of it, and were thick as thieves along the foreshore; so that 'twas only by paying one or two to look the other way that he picked up anything worth carrying off: which you'll allow to be hard, seeing that he was the first man to give news of the wreck.

"Well, the inquiry was held, of course, and my father gave evidence, and for the rest they had to trust to the sloop's papers, for not a soul was saved besides the drummer-boy, and he was raving in a fever, brought on by the cold and the fright. And the seaman and the five troopers gave evidence about the loss of the 'Despatch.' The tall trumpeter, too, whose ribs were healing, came forward and kissed the book; but somehow his head had been hurt in coming ashore, and he

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

talked foolish-like, and 'twas easy seen he would never be a proper man again. The others were taken up to Plymouth, and so went their ways; but the trumpeter stayed on in Coverack; and King George, finding he was fit for nothing, sent him down a trifle of a pension after a while—enough to keep him in board and lodging, with a bit of tobacco over.

“Now the first time that this man—William Tallifer he called himself—met with the drummer-boy, was about a fortnight after the little chap had bettered enough to be allowed a short walk out of doors, which he took, if you please, in full regimentals. There never was a soldier so proud of his dress. His own suit had shrunk a brave bit with the salt water; but into ordinary frock an' corduroys he declared he would not get, not if he had to go naked the rest of his life; so my father—being a good-natured man, and handy with the needle—turned to and repaired damages with a piece or two of scarlet cloth cut from the jacket of one of the drowned Marines. Well, the poor little chap chanced to be standing, in this rig out, down by the gate of Gunner's Meadow, where they had buried two score and over of his comrades. The morning was a fine one, early in March month; and along came the cracked trumpeter, likewise taking a stroll.

“‘Hullo!’ says he; ‘good mornin’! And what might you be doin’ here?’

“‘I was a-wishin’,’ says the boy, ‘I had a pair

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

o' drumsticks. Our lads were buried yonder without so much as a drum tapped or a musket fired; and that's not Christian burial for British soldiers.'

" 'Phut!' says the trumpeter, and spat on the ground; 'a parcel of Marines!'

"The boy eyed him a second or so, and answered up: 'If I'd a tav of turf handy, I'd bung it at your mouth, you greasy cavalryman, and learn you to speak respectful of your betters. The Marines are the handiest body o' men in the service.'

"The trumpeter looked down on him from the height of six-foot two, and asked: 'Did they die well?'

" 'They died very well. There was a lot of running to and fro at first, and some of the men began to cry, and a few to strip off their clothes. But when the ship fell off for the last time, Captain Mein turned and said something to Major Griffiths, the commanding officer on board, and the Major called out to me to beat to quarters. It might have been for a wedding, he sang it out so cheerful. We'd had word already that 'twas to be parade order; and the men fell in as trim and decent as if they were going to church. One or two even tried to shave at the last moment. The Major wore his medals. One of the seamen, seeing I had work to keep the drum steady—the sling being a bit loose for me, and the wind what you remember—lashed it tight with a piece

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

of rope; and that saved my life afterward, a drum being as good as a cork until it's stove. I kept beating away until every man was on deck; and then the Major formed them up and told them to die like British soldiers, and the chaplain was in the middle of a prayer when she struck. In ten minutes she was gone. That was how they died, cavalryman.'

"'And that was very well done, drummer of the Marines. What's your name?'

"'John Christian.'

"'Mine's William George Tallifer, trumpeter, of the Seventh Light Dragoons—the Queen's Own. I played "God Save the King" while our men were drowning. Captain Duncanfield told me to sound a call or two, to put them in heart; but that matter of "God Save the King" was a notion of my own. I won't say anything to hurt the feelings of a Marine, even if he's not much over five-foot tall; but the Queen's Own Hussars is a tearin' fine regiment. As between horse and foot, 'tis a question o' which gets a chance. All the way from Sahagun to Corunna 'twas we that took and gave the knocks—at Mayorga and Rueda, and Bennyventy.'—The reason, sir, I can speak the names so pat, is that my father learnt 'em by heart afterward from the trumpeter, who was always talking about Mayorga and Rueda and Bennyventy.'—We made the rear-guard, under General Paget; and drove the French every time; and all the infantry

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

did was to sit about in wine-shops till we whipped 'em out, an' steal an' straggle an' play the tom-fool in general. And when it came to a stand-up fight at Corunna, 'twas we that had to stay seasick aboard the transports, an' watch the infantry in the thick o' the caper. Very well they behaved, too—specially the Fourth Regiment, an' the Forty-Second Highlanders, an' the Dirty Half-Hundred. Oh, ay; they're decent regiments, all three. But the Queen's Own Hussars is a tearin' fine regiment. So you played on your drum when the ship was goin' down? Drummer John Christian, I'll have to get you a new pair of sticks.'

"The very next day the trumpeter marched into Helston, and got a carpenter there to turn him a pair of box-wood drumsticks for the boy. And this was the beginning of one of the most curious friendships you ever heard tell of. Nothing delighted the pair more than to borrow a boat off my father and pull out to the rocks where the 'Primrose' and the 'Despatch' had struck and sunk; and on still days 'twas pretty to hear them out there off the Manacles, the drummer playing his tattoo—for they always took their music with them—and the trumpeter practising calls, and making his trumpet speak like an angel. But if the weather turned roughish, they'd be walking together and talking; leastwise the youngster listened while the other discoursed about Sir John's campaign in Spain and Portugal, telling

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

how each little skirmish befell; and of Sir John himself, and General Baird, and General Paget, and Colonel Vivian, his own commanding officer, and what kind of men they were; and of the last bloody stand-up at Corunna, and so forth, as if neither could have enough.

"But all this had to come to an end in the late summer, for the boy, John Christian, being now well and strong again, must go up to Plymouth to report himself. 'Twas his own wish (for I believe King George had forgotten all about him), but his friend wouldn't hold him back. As for the trumpeter, my father had made an arrangement to take him on as lodger, as soon as the boy left; and on the morning fixed for the start, he was up at the door here by five o'clock, with his trumpet slung by his side, and all the rest of his belongings in a small valise. A Monday morning it was, and after breakfast he had fixed to walk with the boy some way on the road toward Helston, where the coach started. My father left them at breakfast together, and went out to meat the pig, and do a few odd morning jobs of that sort. When he came back, the boy was still at table, and the trumpeter sat with the rings in his hands, hitched together just as they be at this moment.

" 'Look at this,' he says to my father, showing him the lock. 'I picked it up off a starving brass-worker in Lisbon, and it is not one of your common locks that one word of six letters will open

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

at any time. There's janius in this lock; for you've only to make the rings spell any six-letter word you please and snap down the lock upon that, and never a soul can open it—not the maker, even—until somebody comes along that knows the word you snapped it on. Now Johnny here's goin', and he leaves his drum behind him; for, though he can make pretty music on it, the parchment sags in wet weather, by reason of the seawater getting at it; an' if he carries it to Plymouth, they'll only condemn it and give him another. And, as for me, I shan't have the heart to put lip to the trumpet any more when Johnny's gone. So we've chosen a word together, and locked 'em together upon that; and, by your leave, I'll hang 'em here together on the hook over your fireplace. Maybe Johnny'll come back; maybe not. Maybe, if he comes, I'll be dead an' gone, and he'll take 'em apart an' try their music for old sake's sake. But if he never comes, nobody can separate 'em; for nobody besides knows the word. And if you marry and have sons, you can tell 'em that here are tied together the souls of Johnny Christian, drummer of the Marines, and William George Tallifer, once trumpeter of the Queen's Own Hussars. Amen.'

"With that he hung the two instruments 'pon the hook there; and the boy stood up and thanked my father and shook hands; and the pair went out of the door, toward Helston.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Somewhere on the road they took leave of one another; but nobody saw the parting, nor heard what was said between them. About three in the afternoon the trumpeter came walking back over the hill; and by the time my father came home from the fishing, the cottage was tidied up, and the tea ready, and the whole place shining like a new pin. From that time for five years he lodged here with my father, looking after the house and tilling the garden. And all the while he was steadily failing; the hurt in his head spreading, in a manner, to his limbs. My father watched the feebleness growing on him, but said nothing. And from first to last neither spake a word about the drummer, John Christian; nor did any letter reach them, nor word of his doings.

"The rest of the tale you're free to believe, sir, or not, as you please. It stands upon my father's words, and he always declared he was ready to kiss the Book upon it, before judge and jury. He said, too, that he never had the wit to make up such a yarn; and he defied any one to explain about the lock, in particular, by any other tale. But you shall judge for yourself.

"My father said that about three o'clock in the morning, April fourteenth, of the year 'fourteen, he and William Tallifer were sitting here, just as you and I, sir, are sitting now. My father had put on his clothes a few minutes before, and was mending his spiller by the light of the horn

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

lantern, meaning to set off before daylight to haul the trammel. The trumpeter hadn't been to bed at all. Toward the last he mostly spent his nights (and his days, too) dozing in the elbow-chair where you sit at this minute. He was dozing then (my father said) with his chin dropped forward on his chest, when a knock sounded upon the door, and the door opened, and in walked an upright young man in scarlet regimentals.

"He had grown a brave bit, and his face the color of wood-ashes; but it was the drummer, John Christian. Only his uniform was different from the one he used to wear, and the figures '88' shone in brass upon his collar.

"The drummer walked past my father as if he never saw him, and stood by the elbow-chair and said:

"'Trumpeter, trumpeter, are you one with me?'

"And the trumpeter just lifted the lids of his eyes, and answered: 'How should I not be one with you, drummer Johnny—Johnny boy? If you come, I count; if you march, I mark time; until the discharge comes.'

"'The discharge has come to-night,' said the drummer; and the word is Corunna no longer.' And stepping to the chimney-place, he unhooked the drum and trumpet, and began to twist the brass rings of the lock, spelling the word aloud, so—'C-O-R-U-N-A.' When he had fixed the last letter, the padlock opened in his hand.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

" 'Did you know, trumpeter, that, when I came to Plymouth, they put me into a line regiment?'

" 'The 38th is a good regiment,' answered the old Hussar, still in his dull voice; 'I went back with them from Sahagun to Corunna. At Corunna they stood in General Fraser's division, on the right. They behaved well.

" 'But I'd fain see the Marines again,' says the drummer, handing him the trumpet; 'and you, you shall call once more for the Queen's Own. Matthew,' he says, suddenly, turning on my father—and when he turned, my father saw for the first time that his scarlet jacket had a round hole by the breast-bone, and that the blood was welling there—'Matthew, we shall want your boat.'

" 'Then my father rose on his legs like a man in a dream, while they two slung on, the one his drum, and t'other his trumpet. He took the lantern and went quaking before them down to the shore, and they breathed heavily behind him; and they stepped into his boat, and my father pushed off.

" 'Row you first for Dolor Point,' says the drummer. So my father rowed them past the white houses of Coverack to Dolor Point, and there, at a word, lay on his oars. And the trumpeter, William Tallifer, put his trumpet to his mouth and sounded the reveille. The music of it was like rivers running.

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

“‘They will follow,’ said the drummer. Matthew, pull you now for the Manacles.’

“So my father pulled for the Manacles, and came to an easy close outside Carn Du. And the drummer took his sticks and beat a tattoo, there by the edge of the reef; and the music of it was like a rolling chariot.

“‘That will do,’ says he, breaking off; ‘they will follow. Pull now for the shore under Gunner’s Meadow.’

“Then my father pulled for the shore and ran his boat in under Gunner’s Meadow. And they stepped out, all three, and walked up to the meadow. By the gate the drummer halted, and began his tattoo again, looking out toward the darkness over the sea.

“And while the drum beat, and my father held his breath, there came up out of the sea and the darkness a troop of many men, horse and foot, and formed up among the graves; and others rose out of the graves and formed up—drowned Marines with bleached faces, and pale Hussars, riding their horses, all lean and shadowy. There was no clatter of hoofs or accoutrements, my father said, but a soft sound all the while like the beating of a bird’s wing; and a black shadow lay like a pool about the feet of all. The drummer stood upon a little knoll just inside the gate, and beside him the tall trumpeter, with hand on hip, watching them gather; and behind them both my father, clinging to the gate. When no more

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

came, the drummer stopped playing, and said, 'Call the roll.'

"Then the trumpeter stepped toward the end man of the rank and called, 'Troop Sergeant-Major Thomas Irons,' and the man answered in a thin voice, 'Here.'

" 'Troop Sergeant-Major Thomas Irons, how is it with you?'

"The man answered, 'How should it be with me? When I was young, I betrayed a girl; and when I was grown, I betrayed a friend, and for these I must pay. But I died as a man ought. God save the King!'

"The trumpeter called to the next man, 'Trooper Henry Buckingham,' and the next man answered, 'Here.'

" 'Trooper Henry Buckingham, how is it with you?'

" 'How should it be with me? I was a drunkard, and I stole, and in Lugo, in a wine-shop, I killed a man. But I died as a man should. God save the King!'

"So the trumpeter went down the line; and when he had finished, the drummer took it up, hailing the dead Marines in their order. Each man answered to his name, and each man ended with 'God save the King!' When all were hailed, the drummer stepped back to his mound, and called:

" 'It is well. You are content, and we are content to join you. Wait, now, a little while.'

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

“With this he turned and ordered my father to pick up the lantern, and lead the way back. As my father picked it up, he heard the ranks of the dead men cheer and call, ‘God save the King!’ all together, and saw them waver and fade back into the dark, like a breath fading off a pane.

“But when they came back here to the kitchen, and my father set the lantern down, it seemed they’d both forgot about him. For the drummer turned in the lantern-light—and my father could see the blood still welling out of the hole in his breast—and took the trumpet-sling from around the other’s neck, and locked drum and trumpet together again, choosing the letters on the lock very carefully. While he did this, he said:

“‘The word is no more Corunna, but Bayonne. As you left out an “n” in Corunna, so must I leave out an “n” in Bayonne.’ And before snapping the padlock, he spelt out the word slowly—‘B-A-Y-O-N-E.’ After that, he used no more speech; but turned and hung the two instruments back on the hook; and then took the trumpeter by the arm; and the pair walked out into the darkness, glancing neither to right nor left.

“My father was on the point of following, when he heard a sort of sigh behind him; and there, sitting in the elbow-chair, was the very trumpeter he had just seen walk out by the door!

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

If my father's heart jumped before, you may believe it jumped quicker now. But after a bit, he went up to the man asleep in the chair and put a hand upon him. It was the trumpeter in flesh and blood that he touched; but though the flesh was warm, the trumpeter was dead.

"Well, sir, they buried him three days after; and at first my father was minded to say nothing about his dream (as he thought it). But the day after the funeral, he met Parson Kendall coming from Helston market; and the parson called out: 'Have 'ee heard the news the coach brought down this mornin'?' 'What news?' says my father. 'Why, that peace is agreed upon.' 'None too soon,' says my father. 'Not soon enough for our poor lads at Bayonne,' the parson answered. 'Bayonne!' cries my father, with a jump. 'Why, yes;' and the parson told him all about a great sally the French had made on the night of April 18th. 'Do you happen to know if the 38th Regiment was engaged?' my father asked. 'Come, now,' said Parson Kendall, 'I didn't know you was so well up in the campaign. But, as it happens, I do know that the 38th was engaged, for 'twas they that held a cottage and stopped the French advance.'

"Still my father held his tongue; and when, a week later, he walked in Helston and bought a 'Mercury' off the Sherborne rider, and got the landlord of the 'Angel' to spell out the list of

THE ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF

killed and wounded, sure enough, there among the killed was Drummer John Christian, of the 88th Foot.

"After this there was nothing for a religious man but to make a clean breast. So my father went up to Parson Kendall, and told the whole story. The parson listened, and put a question or two, and then asked:

" 'Have you tried to open the lock since that night?'

" 'I haven't dared to touch it,' says my father.

" 'Then come along and try.' When the parson came to the cottage here, he took the things off the hook and tried the lock. 'Did he say "Bayonne?" The word has seven letters.'

" 'Not if you spell it with one "n" as he did,' says my father.

" 'The parson spelt it out—'B-A-Y-O-N-E.' 'Whew!' says he, for the lock had fallen open in his hand.

" 'He stood considering it a moment, and then he says: 'I tell you what. I shouldn't blab this all round the parish, if I was you. You won't get no credit for truth-telling, and a miracle's wasted on a set of fools. But if you like, I'll shut down the lock again upon a holy word that no one but me shall know, and neither drummer nor trumpeter, dead or alive, shall frighten the secret out of me.'

" 'I wish to heaven you would, parson,' said my father.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"The parson chose the holy word there and then, and shut the lock back upon it, and hung the drum and trumpet back in their place. He is gone long since, taking the word with him. And till the lock is broken by force nobody will ever separate those two."

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE MAMSELL

BY CHARLOTTE NIESE



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“**H**AVE you got something good? Then put the basket down and go along home!” This was one usual greeting from old Mahlmann when we brought him provisions. He was very old, and rarely out of his bed, only now and then on warm summer days he sat on the bench before his tiny cottage and basked in the sun. If a painter had ever strayed to our uninteresting little town he would certainly have put old Mahlmann’s characteristic head on his canvas. He had a clever old face with a firm mouth and glittering eyes whose expression was so sombre and at the same time observant that we children imagined old Mahlmann was different from other people. And indeed so he was. To begin with he never thanked anyone for bringing him food; in fact he criticized freely the benefits he received. If one brought what was not to his liking, he would say: “Go home and tell your mother old Mahlmann is not a waste-tub where you throw what’s not fit to eat. You needn’t come again either!”

Translated by Miss E. C. Emerson, from the German, for Short Stories.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

In this manner he got himself into disfavor with many a good housewife, who would protest by all that was holy that never would she send the hoary old sinner anything again. But Mahlmann never cared. His needs were few and there was always some one to satisfy them.

For me the old man with the sombre eyes had a peculiar fascination; I think from the fact that he once told me a wonderful ghost-story. There were at least half a dozen witches and a whole dozen ghosts in this tale, and for many nights after I went to bed in tears, and only on condition some one sat with me till I fell asleep. Still the spell of these horrors was so strong upon me that I visited Mahlmann all the more, and often bought him something out of my own slender pocket-money to induce him to tell stories. I was not always successful, for the old man had morose moods, when he spoke little. At other times he would tell us his own experiences, and his life had not lacked variety. He had been in Paris at the time of the Revolution, as servant to a Danish officer of high rank, and his description "how the fine gentlemen all rode in an old butcher's cart to have their heads chopped off," left nothing to the imagination. "My Baron was once near going himself to the 'Gartine,' or whatever they call it," he told me one day when he was especially talkative; "but he got well out of it. He was one that could turn the heads of

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

the women, and it was a woman got him safely out of the city."

Mahlmann sat on the bench before the door and stretched his skinny hands to the sun. About his shoulders he had a ragged coat which had once been red, but was now a coat of many colors. It was so hot that I took shelter in the shadow of the doorway, but the chilly old man was shivering. I had brought him a great piece of cake and now offered it to him. He slowly reached for it, and slowly ate it up.

"That's like what I used to get in Paris. Dear me! My Baron was a handsome man, and for my age, I must have been about fifteen, I was a sharp lad—only I couldn't rightly understand their French lingo, which put me out. But I understood the affair of the little Mamsell well enough. She lived opposite; her father was a grocer and she helped in the shop. At first we didn't buy anything there, till a long-legged Englishman told my Baron that this grocer kept a fine Hungarian wine. It was out of the King's wine-cellar and he wasn't drinking any more wine because he had gone to the 'Gartine.' And a few sensible people had divided the wine, which was only right, and it was to be had very cheap. Then I went over and bought some. Mamsell Manon was in the shop, and laughed till she cried over my way of speaking. Then I got angry, and when I brought my Baron the wine I said that I wasn't going again to that stupid

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Mamsell who couldn't even understand German. The next day my master was for sending me again, but I rebelled. 'Herr Baron,' I said, 'you can give me the whip because I'm only a servant, but I won't go again to that silly girl opposite, and if you make me I'll accuse you to the authorities of being an aristocrat. We're all free and equal now, I can understand that much French, and I'll be sorry if you have to go to the "Gartine," but I won't be ill-treated!'

"My Baron looked at me queerly, but he listened to reason, and I didn't have to go to the Mamsell again because he went himself. And then he made friends with Mamsell Manon, and she came over and brought the King's wine herself. When I knew her better she wasn't bad; she laughed a good deal, and sang all the time like a little bird, but one can't go against nature. And she was a good girl too, for once when my Baron put his arm around her and tried to kiss her, she boxed his ears. I never knew my master could look such a fool. The fine gentlemen don't always get their way."

Mahlmann nodded once or twice and ate some crumbs of cake before he went on.

"No, they don't always get their way," he continued. "My Baron wanted to stay longer in Paris, though many of his noble friends lay already in the lime-pit with their heads off. He didn't want to go away, and sat half the day in the shop with Mamsell Manon, and said a Dane

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

wasn't afraid of the French—they'd not do anything to him! Things never turn out as one expects, and one evening my Baron was fetched away by a couple of long soldiers. That was unpleasant I can tell you. My master had been at me sometimes with the whip, and I didn't care specially about him; but to be all alone in such a crazy town where there's not a Christian that understands a word you say, it's enough to give you the horrors. Then the next morning Mamsell Manon came and talked to me, and cried dreadfully, and stroked my cheeks, and I understood her all right in spite of that jabbering French. Mamsell thought a cousin of hers had got the Baron put in prison, because he was jealous. I don't know what more she said, but I soon found out what she wanted, and my hair stood on end. She wanted to borrow my confirmation suit that I had only had on three times; once at the confirmation, then for communion, and then when I came to the Baron to apply for the place. It was lying in my trunk because I had always worn livery, and when the French wouldn't have liveries any more, the Baron gave me an old gray suit of his. When Mamsell insisted upon having my best clothes I naturally said, 'nong, nong,' and shook my head till I was dizzy, but Manon patted me and coaxed me, and sure as the world she got her way, as women always do. All at once I had got my trunk unlocked and she ran away with my confirmation

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

coat and all the rest of the things. And I was still looking after her with my mouth open, when she came back dressed like a man!"

Mahlmann was silent for a moment and wrapped himself with a shiver in his red coat.

"Dear me! how cold it always is now; it used to be warm in July. Things never turn out as one expects. The little Mamsell had promised me faithfully I should have my good clothes back—yes, indeed—bless you! But I must say she looked downright pretty in my best black suit, and I saw why she hadn't worn clothes of the Baron's, or of her own father's. He was short and fat, and the Baron was tall and broad-shouldered, and the little one would not have looked well in their things. Now she looked like a real boy, and like two boys we ran to one of the many prisons where the aristocrats were, I with a basket and she with a basket, with bread and writing-paper, and we took them to the wife of one of the gaolers who earned a lot of money by selling them. The aristocrats were always writing letters, which shows what do-nothings they were; for an honest man has a tongue to talk with, and doesn't need to make marks on paper to kill time. We went to the great prison two or three times; I stayed outside because I was afraid, but Mamsell Manon went in and talked with the gaolers. What more she did I don't know; I waited outside and thought of my confirmation suit, for the little Mamsell wasn't

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

very careful of it. She had had it three days and took it home with her, and I never knew where it was when she was in the shop with her ordinary clothes on. It was always dark when we went out, then she'd come for me and we'd start. I must say she always brought me something, a drop of wine or a bit of cake. The evening of the fourth day when I was waiting for her at the gate of the prison, someone seized hold of my shoulder and said in German, 'Forward!' It was my Baron who stood before me all at once and was in a devil of a hurry to get away. 'Franz!' he said to me, 'be quick or I am lost!' 'Where is the little Mamsell?' I asked, 'and where is my confirmation suit?' Then he grabbed me by the arm and dragged me through the streets till I was out of breath. 'She will come,' he said half to himself, 'to-morrow the mistake will be cleared up, when I am out of the city. Her father will save her.' But though he was still pulling me along, I stopped short. 'Herr Baron,' I said, 'the little Mamsell has got on my best black suit, and the trousers were made out of the Herr Pastor's own, and I tell you if I don't get my suit that I was confirmed in, I'll go to the gentlemen of the head-chopping company and tell them you've broken out of prison, which they certainly won't like. For by rights all the aristocrats ought to go to the "Gartine," or whatever you call it, so that we can have "égalité" and liberty, and we poor fellows can

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

amuse ourselves instead of having all the good times used up by the great gentlemen!' Then he looked at me as if he would like to kill me, but he couldn't do that, so he tried to talk me round with promises. Dear me! what didn't the man promise me! A bag full of money, and a pig every year, and every year a black suit, if I would only go quietly home with him. And he put on my finger on the spot a ring with a red stone that I had always fancied, so I went along quietly with him to his apartment that I had the key of. The Baron slept in my attic room, and I had to lie on the sofa in his best room to look as if I was trying to play the gentleman. The next day the Baron went out twice in a blue blouse with a cap on his head, and the second morning we both went on foot out of the city, in clothes that I wouldn't have liked to touch with a pair of tongs!"

Mahlmann stopped and rubbed his left knee. "What rheumatism I do have! And in the month of July! Well, well, it's always the way when you begin to get old; I suppose I must be about ninety. My grandfather's aunt, though, was more than a hundred and only died then from eating too much at a pig-killing!" He sighed and nodded. "We've all got to be put under ground some day, but it's queer just the same what a difference there is about dying. I'm old now, and that time when I went through Paris in the early morning with a rag-bag on

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

my back, and my Baron with just such another one, was the first time in my life that I ever thought of death, and it isn't a thought for a boy. It was because the carts were passing us with the aristocrats who were going to have their heads chopped off. I'd seen those old carts often enough and naturally thought nothing of it, because it was a good thing that the fine Monsieurs and Madames were got rid off; but this time it startled me, for the little Mamsell was in one of the ramshackle old wagons too. And the strangest of all was she still had on my confirmation suit that made her look like a pretty boy. She had folded her hands and looked as if she was going to communion. There weren't many people in the street, it was so early, and I was just about to open my mouth and cry out that Mamsell had on my black suit and I wanted her to give it back, when my Baron clapped his hand over my mouth and I nearly choked. 'Donnerwetter' how he gripped me! But only a minute, for suddenly his strength gave out and he stood stock-still and began to tremble. He had looked at Manon and she at him. Such a smile came over her face and she bowed her head, and then the cart drove quickly on. My master stood in one spot for as much as a quarter of an hour, and big tears rolled down his cheeks. 'A horrible mistake!' he murmured, 'she told me she was in no danger, that her father would get her free the next day—he could not have found her!

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Heavenly Father, couldst thou not have pity on her youth and beauty?" He said much more and I got impatient when he wouldn't go on, and said, 'Herr Baron, the little Mamsell is gone for good and all, I suppose, and my black suit too, so there's no chance of my ever seeing that again, but if we stay here much longer they'll take us to the "Gartine" too, and the little Mamsell wouldn't wish that, or why should she have made all this fuss about my suit. And by this time she's certainly in heaven, and that's a very good place they say!'

"I talked like this to my Baron, till he began to walk, and went faster and faster, out through the city gates, and never looked back for me till we came to some houses where English lived in a village a few miles from Paris, where the French didn't make such a time as in the city itself. The English were going back to their own country, as all this was rather uncomfortable, and we traveled with them by slow stages to the coast, and then in a small boat to England, where they eat their beef too red for my taste. In other ways they live well enough, and I would have had nothing to complain of if my Baron had been a little more cheerful. He had forgotten how to laugh, had grown pale and silent, and nights instead of sleeping he lay groaning and muttering in French and Danish to himself. In his dreams he was always calling for Manon, a senseless thing to do since she couldn't come!"

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

The old man looked thoughtfully toward the setting sun. "When I thought over the whole affair I felt dreadfully sorry about little Mamsell. She was such a pretty little thing with short brown hair, and such laughing eyes as if there were no trouble or sorrow in the world. I was only a green lad then, and knew nothing about women, but the memory of her smile as she sat in the cart stayed by me. Afterward I once saw a baby lying in its coffin, that looked as content as Mamsell Manon did that day, going to lay her white neck on the block. I grew more reasonable as time went on and forgot my vexation over my black suit. The Baron treated me very decently, I can't complain. Later on, though, he decided we had better part, for I had grown too free in my manners in Paris. He gave me a good present and if I hadn't had all sorts of bad luck I might be a rich man now. But it's always so, there's no 'égalité' in this country, and if we don't have a good revolution it will never be any different. Though it doesn't always turn out well for everyone even then. The French grocer who did such a good business with the King's wine was one of those who could never get enough aristocrats killed; and finally his own flesh and blood went to her death for the sake of one of them. If misfortune is bound to come there's no getting out of it, and it came to me the time they said I belonged to that band of thieves there was such a talk about. I de-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

fended myself well, but all the same I was put in gaol in Glückstadt, and there's no knowing how long I might have stayed there if it hadn't been for a lucky chance that brought the Danish king to see the prison, along with a lot of fine gentlemen. All of us convicts had to stand in rank and file while old Friedrich inspected us. And who should be behind the King but my Baron, with white hair and bent back, and a great star on his breast. They were going slowly past us, when I coughed, and he started and came close to me. 'Do I not know you?' he said, and I laughed a little. 'Herr Baron, do you remember the story of my best black suit?' He looked rather queer and drew his hand across his forehead as if he were wiping something off, and passed on. The next day one of the wardens took me to the Baron's house, and he asked why I was in prison. When he had heard all about it, he sighed and spoke softly to himself and then sighed again. At last he got up and put his hand on my arm. 'You knew her, Franz, and because you knew her——' he could get no further and I was taken away, and soon after pardoned out. So I saw that the Baron remembered my confirmation suit; and ten years after I saw him again in Kiel, in a bath-chair, for he couldn't walk. I went to see him and he sent me ten thalers, and his servant told me he had great trouble with his sons. He is long dead, which is a pity, for he often sent me something. Every-

STORY OF LITTLE MAMSELL

thing comes to an end, everything. In the morning when I lie in bed and can't sleep, I often think of little Manon who died in my black suit in the midst of the aristocrats, where she didn't belong, and my black suit didn't belong there either. Things never turn out as one expects, never!"

A BAL MASQUÉ

BY ALEXANDRE DAVY DE LA PAILLETERIE DUMAS



A BAL MASQUÉ

BY ALEXANDRE DAVY DE LA PAILLETERIE DUMAS

I SAID that I was in to no one; one of my friends forced admission.

My servant announced Mr. Anthony R——. Behind Joseph's livery I saw the corner of a black redingote¹; it is probable that the wearer of the redingote, from his side, saw a flap of my dressing gown; impossible to conceal myself.

"Very well! Let him enter," I said out loud. "Let him go to the devil," I said to myself.

While working it is only the woman you love who can disturb you with impunity, for she is always at bottom interested in what you are doing.

I went up to him, therefore, with the half-bored face of an author interrupted in one of those moments of sorest self-mistrust, while I found him so pale and haggard that the first words I addressed to him were these:

"What is the matter? What has happened to you?"

¹ Redingote is a French corruption of the English word "riding coat" and means generally a long, plain double-breasted street coat.

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Oh! Let me take breath," said he. "I'm going to tell you all about it, besides, it's a dream perhaps, or perhaps I am mad."

He threw himself into an armchair, and let his head drop between his hands.

I looked at him in astonishment; his hair was dripping with rain; his shoes, his knees, and the bottom of his trousers were covered with mud. I went to the window; I saw at the door his servant and his cabriolet; I could make nothing out of it all.

He saw my surprise.

"I have been to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise," said he.

"At ten o'clock in the morning?"

"I was there at seven—cursed *bal masqué*!"

I could not imagine what a *bal masqué* and Père-Lachaise had to do with one another. I resigned myself, and turning my back to the mantelpiece began to roll a cigarette for him between my fingers with the phlegm and the patience of a Spaniard.

While he was coming to the point I hinted to Anthony that I, for my part, was commonly very susceptible to attentions of that kind.

He made me a sign of thanks, but pushed my hand away.

Finally I bent over to light the cigarette for myself: Anthony stopped me.

"Alexandre," he said to me, "Listen, I beg of you."

A BAL MASQUÉ

"But you have been here already a quarter of an hour and have not told me anything."

"Oh! it is a most strange adventure."

I got up, placed my cigarette on the mantel-piece and crossed my arms like a man resigned; only I began to believe, as he did, that he was fast becoming mad.

"You remember the ball at the Opéra, where I met you?" he said to me after a moment's silence.

"The last one where there were at least two hundred people?"

"The very same. I left you with the intention of abandoning myself to one of those varieties of which they spoke to me as being a curiosity even in the midst of our curious times; you wished to dissuade me from going; a fatality drove me on. Oh! you, why did you not see it all, you who have the knack of observation? Why were not Hoffman or Callot there to paint the picture as the fantastic, burlesque thing kept unrolling itself beneath my eyes? Unsatisfied and in melancholy mood I walked away, about to quit the Opéra; I came to a hall that was overflowing and in high spirits: corridors, boxes, parterre. Everything was obstructed. I made a tour of the room; twenty masks called me by name and told me theirs. These were all leaders—aristocrats and merchants—in the undignified disguise of pierrots, of postilions, of merry-andrews, or of fishwives. They were all young

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

people of family, of culture, of talent; and there, forgetful of family, talent, breeding, they were resurrecting in the midst of our sedate and serious times a soirée of the Regency. They had told me about it, and yet I could not have believed it!— I mounted a few steps and leaning against a pillar, half hidden by it, I fixed my eyes on that sea of human beings surging beneath me. Their dominoes, of all colors, their motley costumes, their grotesque disguises formed a spectacle resembling nothing human. The music began to play. Oh, it was then these gargoyles creatures stirred themselves to the sound of that orchestra whose harmony reached me only in the midst of cries, of laughs, of hootings; they hung on to each other by their hands, by their arms, by their necks; a long coil formed itself, beginning with a circular motion, the dancers, men and women, stamping with their feet, made the dust break forth with a noise, the atoms of which were rendered visible by the wan light of the lustres; turning at ever-increasing speed with bizarre postures, with unseemly gestures, with cries full of abandonment; turning always faster and still faster, swaying and swinging like drunken men, yelling like lost women, with more delirium than delight, with more passion than pleasure; resembling a coil of the damned doing infernal penance under the scourge of demons! All this passed beneath my eyes, at my feet. I felt the wind of their whirling past; as they rushed by each one

A BAL MASQUÉ

whom I knew flung a word at me that made me blush. All this noise, all this humming, all this confusion, all this music went on in my brain as well as in the room! I soon came to the point of no longer knowing whether that which I had before my eyes was a dream or reality; I came to the point of asking myself whether it was not I who was mad and they who were sane; I was seized with a weird temptation to throw myself into the midst of this pandemonium, like Faust through the Witches' Sabbath, and I felt that I too, would then have cries, postures, laughs like theirs. Oh! from that to madness there is but one step. I was appalled; I flung myself out of the room, followed even to the street door by shrieks that were like those cries of passion that come out of the caverns of the fallow deer.

"I stopped a moment under the portico to collect myself; I did not wish to venture into the street; with such confusion still in my soul I might not be able to find my way; I might, perhaps, be thrown under the wheels of some carriage I had not seen coming. I was as a drunken man might be who begins to recover sufficient reason in his clouded brain to recognize his condition, and who, feeling the will return but not the power, with fixed eyes and staring, leans motionless against some street post or some tree on the public promenade.

"At that moment a carriage stopped before

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

the door, a woman alighted or rather shot herself from the doorway.

"She entered beneath the peristyle, turning her head from right to left like one who had lost her way; she was dressed in a black domino, had her face covered by a velvet mask. She presented herself at the door.

" 'Your ticket,' said the door-keeper.

" 'My ticket?' she replied. 'I have none.'

" 'Then get one at the box-office.'

"The domino came back under the peristyle, fumbled nervously about in all her pockets.

" 'No money!' she cried. 'Ah! this ring—a ticket of admission for this ring,' she said.

" 'Impossible,' replied the woman who was distributing the cards; 'we do not make bargains of that kind.'

"And she pushed away the brilliant, which fell to the ground and rolled to my side.

"The domino remained still without moving, forgetting the ring, sunk in thought.

"I picked up the ring and handed it to her.

"Through her mask I saw her eyes fixed on mine.

" 'You must help me to get in,' she said to me; 'You must, for pity's sake.'

" 'But I am going out, madame,' I said to her.

" 'Then give me six francs for this ring, and you will render me a service for which I shall bless you my life long.'

"I replaced the ring on her finger; I went to

A BAL MASQUE

the box-office, I took two tickets. We reentered together.

"As we arrived within the corridor I felt that she was tottering. Then with her second hand she made a kind of ring around my arm.

" 'Are you in pain?' I asked her.

" 'No, no, it is nothing,' she replied, 'a dizziness, that is all—'

"She hurried me into the hall.

"We reentered into that giddy Charenton.²

"Three times we made the tour, breaking our way with great difficulty through the waves of masks that were hurling themselves one upon the other; she trembling at every unseemly word that came to her ear; I blushing to be seen giving my arm to a woman who would thus put herself in the way of such words; then we returned to the end of the hall.

"She fell upon a sofa. I remained standing in front of her, my hand leaning on the back of her seat.

" 'Oh! this must seem to you very bizarre,' she said, 'but not more so than to me, I swear to you. I have not the slightest idea of all this' (she looked at the ball), 'for even in my dreams I could not imagine such things. But they wrote me, you see, that he would be here with a woman, and what sort of a woman should it be who could come to a place like this?'

² Charenton Saint Maurice, the lunatic asylum near Paris, commonly designated as Charenton.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"I made a gesture of surprise; she understood.

"But *I* am here, you wish to ask, do you not? Oh! but for me that is another thing: I, I am looking for him; I, I am his wife. As for these people, it is madness and dissipation that drives them hither. But I, I, it is jealousy infernal! I have been everywhere looking for him; I have been all night in a cemetery; I have been at Grève³ on the day of an execution; and yet, I swear to you, as a young girl I have never once gone into the street without my mother; as a wife I have never taken one step out of doors without being followed by a lackey; and yet here I am, the same as all these women who are so familiar with the way; here I am giving my arm to a man whom I do not know, blushing under my mask at the opinion he ought to have of me! I know all this!—Have you ever been jealous, monsieur?"

"Unhappily," I replied to her.

"Then you will forgive me, for you understand. You know that voice that cries out to you "Do!" as in the ear of a madame; you have felt that arm that pushes one into shame and crime, like the arm of fate. You know that at such a moment one is capable of everything, if one can only get vengeance."

"I was about to reply; all at once she rose, her eyes fastened on two dominoes that were passing in front of us at that moment.

³The name of a public square in Paris where executions formerly took place.

A BAL MASQUÉ

“‘Silence!’ she said.

“And she hurried me on following in their footsteps. I was thrown into the middle of an intrigue of which I understood nothing; I could feel all the threads vibrating, but could take hold of none of them by the end; but this poor wife seemed so troubled that she became interesting. I obeyed like a child, so imperious is real feeling, and we set ourselves to follow the two masks, one of which was evidently a man, the other a woman. They spoke in a low voice; the sounds reached our ears with difficulty.

“‘It is he!’ she murmured; ‘it is his voice; yes, yes, that is his figure—’

“The latter of the two dominoes began to laugh.

“‘That is his laugh,’ said she; ‘it is he, monsieur, it is he! The letter said true, O, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!’

“In the meanwhile the two masks kept on, and we followed them always. They went out of the hall, and we went out after them; they took the stairs leading to the boxes, and we ascended in their footsteps; they did not stop till they came to the boxes in the centre; we were like their two shadows. A little closed box was opened; they entered it; the door again closed upon them.

“The poor creature I was supporting on my arm frightened me by her excitement. I could not see her face, but crushed against me as she was, I could feel her heart beating, her body

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

shivering, her limbs trembling. There was something uncanny in the way there came to me such knowledge of unheard-of suffering, the spectacle of which I had before my very eyes, of whose victim I knew nothing, and of the cause of which I was completely ignorant. Nevertheless, for nothing in this world would I have abandoned that woman at such a moment.

"As she saw the two masks enter the box and the box close upon them, she stopped still a moment, motionless, and as if overwhelmed. Then she sprang forward to the door to listen. Placed as she was her slightest movement would betray her presence and ruin her; I dragged her back violently by the arm, I lifted the latch of the adjoining box, I drew her in after me, I lowered the grille and pulled the door to.

"‘If you wish to listen,’ I said to her, ‘at least listen from here.’

"She fell upon one knee and flattened her ear against the partition, and I—I held myself erect on the opposite side, my arms crossed, my head bent and thoughtful.

"All that I had been able to observe of that woman seemed to me to indicate a type of beauty. The lower part of her face, which was not concealed by her mask, was youthful, velvety, and round; her lips were scarlet and delicate; her teeth, which the black velvet mask falling just above them made appear still whiter, were small, separated, and glistening; her hand was one to

A BAL MASQUÉ

be modeled, her figure to be held between the fingers; her black hair, silky, escaped in profusion from beneath the hood of her domino, and the foot of a child, that played in and out under her skirt, looked as if it should have trouble in balancing her body, all lithe, all graceful, all airy as it was. Oh, what a marvelous piece of perfection must she be! Oh! he that should hold her in his arms, that should see every faculty of that spirit absorbed in loving him, that should feel the beating of her heart against his, her tremblings, her nervous palpitations, and that should be able to say: 'All of this, all of this, comes of love, of love for me, for me alone among all the millions of men, for me, angel predestined! Oh! that man!—that man!—'

"Such were my thoughts, when all at once I saw that woman rise, turn toward me, and say to me in a voice broken and fierce:

"'Monsieur, I am beautiful, I swear it; I am young, I am but nineteen. Until now I have been white as an angel of the Creation—ah, well—' she threw both arms about my neck, '—ah, well, I am yours—take me!—'

"At the same instant I felt her lips pressed close to mine, and the effect of a bite, rather than that of a kiss, ran shuddering and dismayed through my whole body; over my eyes passed a cloud of flame.

"Ten minutes later I was holding her in my arms, in a swoon, half dead and sobbing.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Slowly she came to herself; through her mask I made out how haggard were her eyes; I saw the lower part of her pale face, I heard her teeth chatter one upon the other, as in the chill of a fever. I see it all once more.

"She remembered all that taken place, and fell at my feet.

"'If you have any compassion,' she said to me, sobbing, 'any pity, turn away your eyes from me, never seek to know me; let me go and forget me. I will remember for two!'

"At these words she rose again; quickly, like a thought that escapes us, she darted toward the door, opened it, and coming back again, 'Do not follow me, in heaven's name, Monsieur, do not follow me!' she said.

"The door pushed violently open, closed again between her and me, stole her from my sight, like an apparition. I have never seen her more!

"I have never seen her more! And ever since, ever since the six months that have glided by, I have sought her everywhere, at balls, at spectacles, at promenades. Every time I have seen from a distance a woman with lithe figure, with a foot like a child's, with black hair, I have followed her, I have drawn near to her, I have looked into her face, hoping that her blushes would betray her. Nowhere have I found her again, in no place have I seen her again—except at night, except in my dreams! Oh! there, there she reappears; there I feel her, I feel her

A BAL MASQUÉ

embraces, her biting caresses so ardent, as if she had something of the devil in her; then the mask has fallen and a face most grotesque appeared to me at times blurred as if veiled in a cloud; sometimes brilliant, as if circled by an aureole; sometimes pale, with a skull white and naked, with eyes vanished from the orbits, with teeth chattering and few. In short, ever since that night, I have ceased to live; burning with mad passion for a woman I do not know, hoping always and always disappointed at my hopes. Jealous without the right to be so, without knowing of whom to be jealous, not daring to avow such madness, and all the time pursued, preyed upon, wasted away, consumed by her."

As he finished these words he tore a letter from his breast.

"Now that I have told you everything," he said to me, "take this letter and read it."

I took the letter and read:

"Have you perhaps forgotten a poor woman who has forgotten nothing and who dies because she can not forget?

"When you receive this letter I shall be no more. Then go to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, tell the concierge to let you see among the newest graves one that bears on its stone the simple name 'Marie,' and when you are face to face with that grave, fall on your knees and pray."

"Ah, well!" continued Anthony, "I received that letter yesterday, and I went there this morn-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ing. The concierge conducted me to the grave, and I remained two hours on my knees there, praying and weeping. Do you understand? She was there, that woman. Her flaming spirit had stolen away; the body consumed by it had bowed, even to breaking, beneath the burden of jealousy and of remorse; she was there, under my feet, and she had lived, and she had died, for me unknown; unknown!—and taking a place in my life as she had taken one in the grave; unknown!—and burying in my heart a corpse, cold and lifeless, as she had buried one in the sepulchre—Oh! Do you know anything to equal it? Do you know any event so appalling? Therefore, now, no more hope. I will see her again never. I would dig up her grave that I might recover, perhaps, some traces wherewithal to reconstruct her face; and I love her always! Do you understand, Alexandre? I love her like a madman, and I would kill myself this instant in order to rejoin her, if she were not to remain unknown to me for eternity, as she was unknown to me in this world.”

With these words he snatched the letter from my hands, kissed it over and over again, and began to weep like a little child.

I took him in my arms, and not knowing what to say to him, I wept with him.

THE RED ROOM

BY H. G. WELLS

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm once more.

I heard the faint sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags in the passage outside. The door creaked on its hinges as a second old man entered, more bent, more wrinkled, more aged even than the first. He supported himself by the help of a crutch, his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth. He made straight for an armchair on the opposite side of the table, sat down clumsily, and began to cough. The man with the withered hand gave the newcomer a short glance of positive dislike; the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire.

"I said—it's your own choosing," said the man with the withered hand, when the coughing had ceased for a while.

"It's my own choosing," I answered.

The man with the shade became aware of my presence for the first time, and threw his head back for a moment, and sidewise, to see me. I caught a momentary glimpse of his eyes, small and bright and inflamed. Then he began to cough and splutter again.

"Why don't you drink?" said the man with the withered arm, pushing the beer toward him. The man with the shade poured out a glassful with a shaking hand, that splashed half as much again

THE RED ROOM

on the deal table. A monstrous shadow of him crouched upon the wall, and mocked his action as he poured and drank. I must confess I had scarcely expected these grotesque custodians. There is, to my mind, something inhuman in senility, something crouching and atavistic; the human qualities seem to drop from old people insensibly day by day. The thrée of them made me feel uncomfortable with their gaunt silences, their bent carriage, their evident unfriendliness to me and to one another. And that night, perhaps, I was in the mood for uncomfortable impressions. I resolved to get away from their vague fore-shadowings of the evil things upstairs.

"If," said I, "you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will make myself comfortable there."

The old man with the cough jerked his head back so suddenly that it startled me, and shot another glance of his red eyes at me from out of the darkness under the shade, but no one answered me. I waited a minute, glancing from one to the other. The old woman stared like a dead body, glaring into the fire with lack-lustre eyes.

"If," I said, a little louder, "if you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will relieve you from the task of entertaining me."

"There's a candle on the slab outside the door," said the man with the withered hand, looking at my feet as he addressed me. "But if you go to the Red Room to-night—"

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"This night of all nights!" said the old woman, softly.

"—You go alone."

"Very well," I answered, shortly, "and which way do I go?"

"You go along the passage for a bit," said he, nodding his head on his shoulder at the door, "until you come to a spiral staircase; and on the second landing is a door covered with green baize. Go through that, and down the long corridor to the end, and the Red Room is on your left up the steps."

"Have I got that right?" I said, and repeated his directions.

He corrected me in one particular.

"And you are really going?" said the man with the shade, looking at me again for the third time with that queer, unnatural tilting of the face.

"This night of all nights!" whispered the old woman.

"It is what I came for," I said, and moved toward the door. As I did so, the old man with the shade rose and staggered round the table, so as to be closer to the others and to the fire. At the door I turned and looked at them, and saw they were all close together, dark against the firelight, staring at me over their shoulders, with an intent expression on their ancient faces.

"Good-night," I said, setting the door open.

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm.

THE RED ROOM

I left the door wide open until the candle was well alight, and then I shut them in, and walked down the chilly, echoing passage.

I must confess that the oddness of these three old pensioners in whose charge her ladyship had left the castle, and the deep-toned, old-fashioned furniture of the housekeeper's room, in which they foregathered, had affected me curiously in spite of my effort to keep myself at a matter-of-fact phase. They seemed to belong to another age, an older age, an age when things spiritual were indeed to be feared, when common sense was uncommon, an age when omens and witches were credible, and ghosts beyond denying. Their very existence, thought I, is spectral; the cut of their clothing, fashions born in dead brains; the ornaments and conveniences in the room about them even are ghostly—the thoughts of vanished men, which still haunt rather than participate in the world of to-day. And the passage I was in, long and shadowy, with a film of moisture glistening on the wall, was as gaunt and cold as a thing that is dead and rigid. But with an effort I sent such thoughts to the right-about. The long, drafty subterranean passage was chilly and dusty, and my candle flared and made the shadows cower and quiver. The echoes rang up and down the spiral staircase, and a shadow came sweeping up after me, and another fled before me into the darkness overhead. I came to the wide landing and stopped there for a moment listening

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

to a rustling that I fancied I heard creeping behind me, and then, satisfied of the absolute silence, pushed open the unwilling baize-covered door and stood in the silent corridor.

The effect was scarcely what I expected, for the moonlight, coming in by the great window on the grand staircase, picked out everything in vivid black shadow or reticulated silvery illumination. Everything seemed in its proper position; the house might have been deserted on the yesterday instead of twelve months ago. There were candles in the sockets of the sconces, and whatever dust had gathered on the carpets or upon the polished flooring was distributed so evenly as to be invisible in my candlelight. A waiting stillness was over everything. I was about to advance, and stopped abruptly. A bronze group stood upon the landing hidden from me by a corner of the wall; but its shadow fell with marvelous distinctness upon the white paneling, and gave me the impression of some one crouching to waylay me. The thing jumped upon my attention suddenly. I stood rigid for half a moment, perhaps. Then, with my hand in the pocket that held the revolver, I advanced, only to discover a Ganymede and Eagle, glistening in the moonlight. That incident for a time restored my nerve, and a dim porcelain Chinaman on a buhl table, whose head rocked as I passed, scarcely startled me.

The door of the Red Room and the steps up to it were in a shadowy corner. I moved my candle

THE RED ROOM

from side to side in order to see clearly the nature of the recess in which I stood, before opening the door. Here it was, thought I, that my predecessor was found, and the memory of that story gave me a sudden twinge of apprehension. I glanced over my shoulder at the black Ganymede in the moonlight, and opened the door of the Red Room rather hastily, with my face half turned to the pallid silence of the corridor.

I entered, closed the door behind me at once, turned the key I found in the lock within, and stood with the candle held aloft surveying the scene of my vigil, the great Red Room of Lorraine Castle, in which the young Duke had died; or rather in which he had begun his dying, for he had opened the door and fallen headlong down the steps I had just ascended. That had been the end of his vigil, of his gallant attempt to conquer the ghostly tradition of the place, and never, I thought, had apoplexy better served the ends of superstition. There were other and older stories that clung to the room, back to the half-incredible beginning of it all, the tale of a timid wife and the tragic end that came to her husband's jest of frightening her. And looking round that huge shadowy room with its black window bays, its recesses and alcoves, its dusty brown-red hangings and dark gigantic furniture, one could well understand the legends that had sprouted in its black corners, its germinating darknesses. My candle was a little tongue of light in the vastness

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

of the chamber; its rays failed to pierce to the opposite end of the room, and left an ocean of dull red mystery and suggestion, sentinel shadows and watching darknesses beyond its island of light. And the stillness of desolation brooded over it all.

I must confess some impalpable quality of that ancient room disturbed me. I tried to fight the feeling down. I resolved to make a systematic examination of the place, and so, by leaving nothing to the imagination, dispel the fanciful suggestions of the obscurity before they obtained a hold upon me. After satisfying myself of the fastening of the door, I began to walk round the room, peering round each article of furniture, tucking up the valances of the bed and opening its curtains wide. In one place there was a distinct echo to my footsteps, the noises I made seemed so little that they enhanced rather than broke the silence of the place. I pulled up the blinds and examined the fastenings of the several windows. Attracted by the fall of a particle of dust, I leaned forward and looked up the blackness of the wide chimney. Then, trying to preserve my scientific attitude of mind, I walked round and began tapping the oak paneling for any secret opening, but I desisted before reaching the alcove. I saw my face in a mirror—white.

There were two big mirrors in the room, each with a pair of sconces bearing candles, and on the

THE RED ROOM

mantelshelf, too, were candles in china candlesticks. All these I lit one after the other. The fire was laid—an unexpected consideration from the old housekeeper—and I lit it, to keep down any disposition to shiver, and when it was burning well I stood round with my back to it and regarded the room again. I had pulled up a chintz-covered armchair and a table to form a kind of barricade before me. On this lay my revolver, ready to hand. My precise examination had done me a little good, but I still found the remoter darkness of the place and its perfect stillness too stimulating for the imagination. The echoing of the stir and crackling of the fire was no sort of comfort to me. The shadow in the alcove at the end of the room began to display that undefinable quality of a presence, that odd suggestion of a lurking living thing that comes so easily in silence and solitude. And to reassure myself, I walked with a candle into it and satisfied myself that there was nothing tangible there. I stood that candle upon the floor of the alcove and left it in that position.

By this time I was in a state of considerable nervous tension, although to my reason there was no adequate cause for my condition. My mind, however, was perfectly clear. I postulated quite unreservedly that nothing supernatural could happen, and to pass the time I began stringing some rhymes together, Ingoldsby fashion, concerning the original legend of the place. A few

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

I spoke aloud, but the echoes were not pleasant. For the same reason I also abandoned, after a time, a conversation with myself upon the impossibility of ghosts and haunting. My mind reverted to the three old and distorted people downstairs, and I tried to keep it upon that topic.

The sombre reds and grays of the room troubled me; even with its seven candles the place was merely dim. The light in the alcove flaring in a draft, and the fire flickering, kept the shadows and penumbra perpetually shifting and stirring in a noiseless flighty dance. Casting about for a remedy, I recalled the wax candles I had seen in the corridor, and, with a slight effort, carrying a candle and leaving the door open, I walked out into the moonlight, and presently returned with as many as ten. These I put in the various knick-knacks of china with which the room was sparsely adorned, and lit and placed them where the shadows had lain deepest, some on the floor, some in the window recesses, arranging and rearranging them until at last my seventeen candles were so placed that not an inch of the room but had the direct light of at least one of them. It occurred to me that when the ghost came I could warn him not to trip over them. The room was now quite brightly illuminated. There was something very cheering and reassuring in these little silent streaming flames, and to notice their steady diminution of length offered

THE RED ROOM

me an occupation and gave me a reassuring sense of the passage of time.

Even with that, however, the brooding expectation of the vigil weighed heavily enough upon me. I stood watching the minute hand of my watch creep towards midnight.

Then something happened in the alcove. I did not see the candle go out, I simply turned and saw that the darkness was there, as one might start and see the unexpected presence of a stranger. The black shadow had sprung back to its place. "By Jove," said I aloud, recovering from my surprise, "that draft's a strong one;" and taking the matchbox from the table, I walked across the room in a leisurely manner to relight the corner again. My first match would not strike, and as I succeeded with the second, something seemed to blink on the wall before me. I turned my head involuntarily and saw that the two candles on the little table by the fireplace were extinguished. I rose at once to my feet.

"Odd," I said. "Did I do that myself in a flash of absent-mindedness?"

I walked back, relit one, and as I did so I saw the candle in the right sconce of one of the mirrors wink and go right out, and almost immediately its companion followed it. The flames vanished as if the wick had been suddenly nipped between a finger and thumb, leaving the wick neither glowing nor smoking, but black. While I stood gaping the candle at the foot of the bed went out,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

and the shadows seemed to take another step toward me.

"This won't do!" said I, and first one and then another candle on the mantelshef followed.

"What's up?" I cried, with a queer high note getting into my voice somehow. At that the candle on the corner of the wardrobe went out, and the one I had relit in the alcove followed.

"Steady on!" I said, "those candles are wanted," speaking with a half-hysterical facetiousness, and scratching away at a match the while, "for the mantel candlesticks." My hands trembled so much that twice I missed the rough paper of the matchbox. As the mantel emerged from darkness again, two candles in the remoter end of the room were eclipsed. But with the same match I also relit the larger mirror candles, and those on the floor near the doorway, so that for the moment I seemed to gain on the extinctions. But then in a noiseless volley there vanished four lights at once in different corners of the room, and I struck another match in quivering haste, and stood hesitating whither to take it.

As I stood undecided, an invisible hand seemed to sweep out the two candles on the table. With a cry of terror I dashed at the alcove, then into the corner and then into the window, relighting three as two more vanished by the fireplace, and then, perceiving a better way, I dropped matches on the iron-bound deedbox in the corner, and caught up the bedroom candlestick. With this I

THE RED ROOM

avoided the delay of striking matches, but for all that the steady process of extinction went on, and the shadows I feared and fought against returned, and crept in upon me, first a step gained on this side of me, then on that. I was now almost frantic with the horror of the coming darkness, and my self-possession deserted me. I leaped panting from candle to candle in a vain struggle against that remorseless advance.

I bruised myself in the thigh against the table, I sent a chair headlong, I stumbled and fell and whisked the cloth from the table in my fall. My candle rolled away from me and I snatched another as I rose. Abruptly this was blown out as I swung it off the table by the wind of my sudden movement, and immediately the two remaining candles followed. But there was light still in the room, a red light, that streamed across the ceiling and staved off the shadows from me. The fire! Of course I could still thrust my candle between the bars and relight it.

I turned to where the flames were still dancing between the glowing coals and splashing red reflections upon the furniture; made two steps toward the grate, and incontinently the flames dwindled and vanished, the glow vanished, the reflections rushed together and disappeared, and as I thrust the candle between the bars darkness closed upon me like the shutting of an eye, wrapped about me in a stifling embrace, sealed my vision, and crushed the last vestiges of self-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

possession from my brain. And it was not only palpable darkness, but intolerable terror. The candle fell from my hands. I flung out my arms in a vain effort to thrust that ponderous blackness away from me, and lifting up my voice, screamed with all my might, once, twice, thrice. Then I think I must have staggered to my feet. I know I thought suddenly of the moonlit corridor, and with my head bowed and my arms over my face, made a stumbling run for the door.

But I had forgotten the exact position of the door, and I struck myself heavily against the corner of the bed. I staggered back, turned, and was either struck or struck myself against some other bulky furnishing. I have a vague memory of battering myself thus to and fro in the darkness, of a heavy blow at last upon my forehead, of a horrible sensation of falling that lasted an age, of my last frantic effort to keep my footing, and then I remember no more.

I opened my eyes in daylight. My head was roughly bandaged, and the man with the withered hand was watching my face. I looked about me trying to remember what had happened, and for a space I could not recollect. I rolled my eyes into the corner and saw the old woman, no longer abstracted, no longer terrible, pouring out some drops of medicine from a little blue phial into a glass. "Where am I?" I said. "I seem to remember you, and yet I can not remember who you are."

THE RED ROOM

They told me then, and I heard of the haunted Red Room as one who bears a tale. "We found you at dawn," said he, "and there was blood on your forehead and lips."

I wondered that I had ever disliked him. The three of them in the daylight seemed commonplace old folk enough. The man with the green shade had his head bent as one who sleeps.

It was very slowly I recovered the memory of my experience. "You believe now," said the old man with the withered hand, "that the room is haunted?" He spoke no longer as one who greets an intruder, but as one who condoles with a friend.

"Yes," said I, "the room is haunted."

"And you have seen it. And we who have been here all our lives have never set eyes upon it. Because we have never dared. Tell us, is it truly the old earl who—"

"No," said I, "it is not."

"I told you so," said the old lady, with the glass in her hand. "It is his poor young countess who was frightened—"

"It is not," I said. "There is neither ghost of earl nor ghost of countess in that room; there is no ghost there at all, but worse, far worse, something impalpable—"

"Well?" they said.

"The worst of all the things that haunt poor mortal men," said I; "and that is, in all its nakedness—'Fear!' Fear that will not have light nor

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

sound, that will not bear with reason, that deafens and darkens and overwhelms. It followed me through the corridor, it fought against me in the room—”

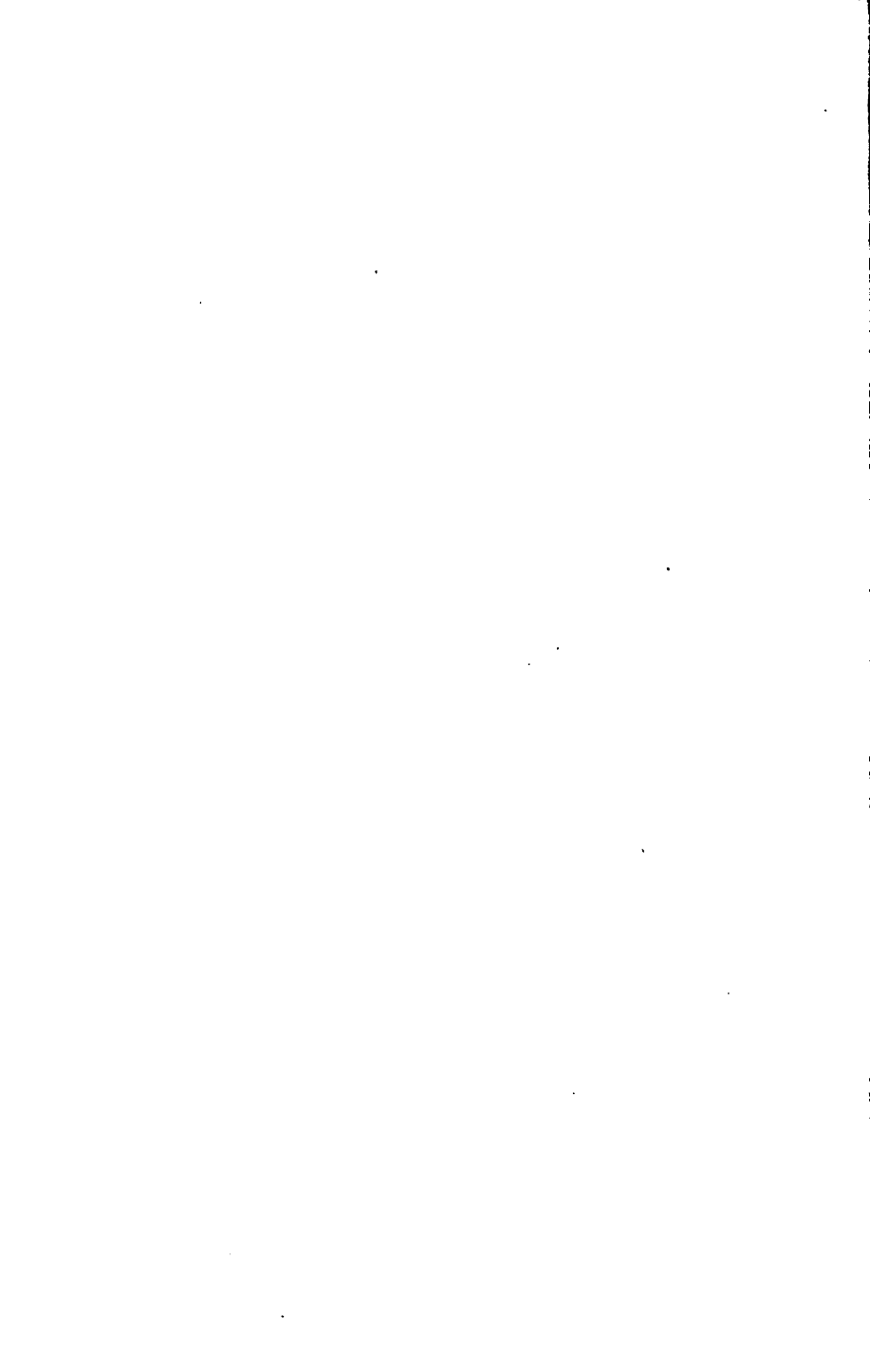
I stopped abruptly. There was an interval of silence. My hand went up to my bandages. “The candles went out one after another, and I fled—”

Then the man with the shade lifted his face sideways to see me and spoke.

“That is it,” said he. “I knew that was it. A Power of Darkness. To put such a curse upon a home! It lurks there always. You can feel it even in the daytime, even of a bright summer’s day, in the hangings, in the curtains, keeping behind you however you face about. In the dusk it creeps in the corridor and follows you, so that you dare not turn. It is even as you say. Fear itself is in that room. Black Fear . . . And there it will be . . . so long as this house of sin endures.”

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

BY ÉMILE ZOLA



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I

COQUEVILLE is a little village planted in a cleft in the rocks, two leagues from Grandport. A fine sandy beach stretches in front of the huts lodged half-way up in the side of the cliff like shells left there by the tide. As one climbs to the heights of Grandport, on the left the yellow sheet of sand can be very clearly seen to the west like a river of gold dust streaming from the gaping cleft in the rock; and with good eyes one can even distinguish the houses, whose tones of rust spot the rock and whose chimneys send up their bluish trails to the very crest of the great slope, streaking the sky. It is a deserted hole. Coqueville has never been able to attain to the figure of two hundred inhabitants. The gorge which opens into the sea, and on the threshold of which the village is planted, burrows into the earth by turns so abrupt and by descents so steep that it is almost impossible to pass there with wagons. It cuts off all communication and isolates the country so that one seems to be a hundred leagues from the neighboring hamlets.

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GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Moreover, the inhabitants have communication with Grandport only by water. Nearly all of them fishermen, living by the ocean, they carry their fish there every day in their barks. A great commission house, the firm of Dufeu, buys their fish on contract. The father Dufeu has been dead some years, but the widow Dufeu has continued the business; she has simply engaged a clerk, M. Mouchel, a big blond devil, charged with beating up the coast and dealing with the fishermen. This M. Mouchel is the sole link between Coqueville and the civilized world.

Coqueville merits a historian. It seems certain that the village, in the night of time, was founded by the Mahés; a family which happened to establish itself there and which grew vigorous at the foot of the cliff. These Mahés continued to prosper at first, marrying continually among themselves, for during centuries one finds none but Mahés there. Then under Louis XIII appeared one Floche. No one knew too much of where he came from. He married a Mahé, and from that time a phenomenon was brought forth; the Floches in their turn prospered and multiplied exceedingly, so that they ended little by little in absorbing the Mahés, whose numbers diminished until their fortune passed entirely into the hands of the newcomers. Without doubt, the Floches brought new blood, more vigorous physical organs, a temperament which adapted itself better to that hard condition of high wind and of high

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

sea. At any rate, they are to-day masters of Coqueville.

It can easily be understood that this displacement of numbers and of riches was not accomplished without terrible disturbances. The Mahés and the Floches detest each other. Between them is a hatred of centuries. The Mahés in spite of their decline retain the pride of ancient conquerors. After all they are the founders, the ancestors. They speak with contempt of the first Floche, a beggar, a vagabond picked up by them from feelings of pity, and to have given away one of their daughters to whom was their eternal regret. This Floche, to hear them speak, had engendered nothing but a descent of libertines and thieves, who pass their nights in raising children and their days in coveting legacies. And there is not an insult they do not heap upon the powerful tribe of Floche, seized with that bitter rage of nobles, decimated, ruined, who see the spawn of the bourgeoisie master of their rents and of their château. The Floches, on their side, naturally have the insolence of those who triumph. They are in full possession, a thing to make them insolent. Full of contempt for the ancient race of the Mahés, they threaten to drive them from the village if they do not bow their heads. To them they are starvelings, who instead of draping themselves in their rags would do much better to mend them.

So Coqueville finds itself a prey to two fierce

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

factions—something like one hundred and thirty inhabitants bent upon devouring the other fifty for the simple reason that they are the stronger.

The struggle between two great empires has no other history.

Among the quarrels which have lately upset Coqueville, they cite the famous enmity of the brothers, Fouasse and Tupain, and the ringing battles of the Rouget ménage. You must know that every inhabitant in former days received a surname, which has become to-day the regular name of the family; for it was difficult to distinguish one's self among the cross-breeds of the Mahés and the Floches. Rouget assuredly had an ancestor of fiery blood. As for Fouasse and Tupain, they were called thus without knowing why, many surnames having lost all rational meaning in course of time. Well, old Françoise, a wanton of eighty years who lived forever, had had Fouasse by a Mahé, then becoming a widow, she remarried with a Floche and brought forth Tupain. Hence the hatred of the two brothers, made specially lively by the question of inheritance. At the Rouget's they beat each other to a jelly because Rouget accused his wife, Marie, of being unfaithful to him for a Floche, the tall Brisemotte, a strong, dark man, on whom he had already twice thrown himself with a knife, yelling that he would rip open his belly. Rouget, a small, nervous man, was a great spitfire.

But that which interested Coqueville most

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

deeply was neither the tantrums of Rouget nor the differences between Tupain and Fouasse. A great rumor circulated: Delphin, a Mahé, a rascal of twenty years, dared to love the beautiful Margot, the daughter of La Queue, the richest of the Floches and chief man of the country. This La Queue was, in truth, a considerable personage. They called him La Queue because his father, in the days of Louis Philippe, had been the last to tie up his hair, with the obstinacy of old age that clings to the fashions of its youth. Well, then, La Queue owned one of the two large fishing smacks of Coqueville, the "Zephir," by far the best, still quite new and seaworthy. The other big boat, the "Baleine," a rotten old patache,¹ belonged to Rouget, whose sailors were Delphin and Fouasse, while La Queue took with him Tupain and Brisemotte. These last had grown weary of laughing contemptuously at the "Baleine"; a sabot, they said, which would disappear some fine day under the billows like a handful of mud. So when La Queue learned that that ragamuffin of a Delphin, the froth of the "Baleine," allowed himself to go prowling around his daughter, he delivered two sound whacks at Margot, a trifle merely to warn her that she should never be the wife of a Mahé. As a result, Margot, furious, declared that she would pass that pair of slaps on to Delphin if he ever ventured to rub against her skirts. It was vexing

¹ Naval term signifying a rickety old concern.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

to be boxed on the ears for a boy whom she had never looked in the face!

Margot, at sixteen years strong as a man and handsome as a lady, had the reputation of being a scornful person, very hard on lovers. And from that, added to the trifle of the two slaps, of the presumptuousness of Delphin, and of the wrath of Margot, one ought easily to comprehend the endless gossip of Coqueville.

Notwithstanding, certain persons said that Margot, at bottom, was not so very furious at sight of Delphin circling around her. This Delphin was a little blonde, with skin bronzed by the sea-glare, and with a mane of curly hair that fell over his eyes and in his neck. And very powerful despite his slight figure; quite capable of thrashing any one three times his size. They said that at times he ran away and passed the night in Grandport. That gave him the reputation of a werwolf with the girls, who accused him, among themselves, of "making a life of it"—a vague expression in which they included all sorts of unknown pleasures. Margot, when she spoke of Delphin, betrayed too much feeling. He, smiling with an artful air, looked at her with eyes half shut and glittering, without troubling himself the least in the world over her scorn or her transports of passion. He passed before her door, he glided along by the bushes watching for her hours at a time, full of the patience and the cunning of a cat lying in wait for a tomtit; and

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

when suddenly she discovered him behind her skirts, so close to her at times that she guessed it by the warmth of his breath, he did not fly, he took on an air gentle and melancholy which left her abashed, stifled, not regaining her wrath until he was some distance away. Surely, if her father saw her he would smite her again. But she boasted in vain that Delphin would some day get that pair of slaps she had promised him; she never seized the moment to apply them when he was there; which made people say that she ought not to talk so much, since in the end she kept the slaps herself.

No one, however, supposed she could ever be Delphin's wife. In her case they saw the weakness of a coquette. As for a marriage between the most beggardly of the Mahés, a fellow who had not six shirts to set up housekeeping with, and the daughter of the mayor, the richest heir-ess of the Floches, it would seem simply monstrous.

Evil tongues insinuated that she could perfectly go with him all the same, but that she would certainly not marry him. A rich girl takes her pleasure as it suits her; only, if she has a head, she does not commit a folly. Finally all Coqueville interested itself in the matter, curious to know how things would turn out. Would Delphin get his two slaps? or else Margot, would she let herself be kissed on both cheeks in some hole in the cliff? They must see! There were some

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

for the slaps and there were some for the kisses. Coqueville was in revolution.

In the village two people only, the curé and the *garde champêtre*,² belonged neither to the Mahés nor to the Floches. The *garde champêtre*, a tall, dried-up fellow, whose name no one knew, but who was called the Emperor, no doubt because he had served under Charles X, as a matter of fact exercised no burdensome supervision over the commune which was all bare rocks and waste lands. A sub-prefect who patronized him had created for him the sinecure where he devoured in peace his very small living.

As for the Abbé Radiguet, he was one of those simple-minded priests whom the bishop, in his desire to be rid of him, buries in some out of the way hole. He lived the life of an honest man, once more turned peasant, hoeing his little garden redeemed from the rock, smoking his pipe and watching his salads grow. His sole fault was a gluttony which he knew not how to refine, reduced to adoring mackerel and to drinking, at times, more cider than he could contain. In other respects, the father of his parishioners, who came at long intervals to hear a mass to please him.

But the curé and the *garde champêtre* were obliged to take sides after having succeeded for a long time in remaining neutral. Now, the Emperor held for the Mahés, while the Abbé Radi-

² Watchman.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

guet supported the Floches. Hence complications. As the Emperor, from morning to night, lived like a bourgeois [citizen], and as he wearied of counting the boats which put out from Grand-port, he took it upon himself to act as village police. Having become the partizan of the Mahés, through native instinct for the preservation of society, he sided with Fouasse against Tupain; he tried to catch the wife of Rouget in *flagrante delicto* with Brisemotte, and above all he closed his eyes when he saw Delphin slipping into Margot's courtyard. The worst of it was that these tactics brought about heated quarrels between the Emperor and his natural superior, the mayor La Queue. Respectful of discipline, the former heard the reproaches of the latter, then recommenced to act as his head dictated; which disorganized the public authority of Coqueville. One could not pass before the shed ornamented with the name of the town hall without being deafened by the noise of some dispute. On the other hand, the Abbé Radiguet rallied to the triumphant Floches, who loaded him with superb mackerel, secretly encouraged the resistance of Rouget's wife and threatened Margot with the flames of hell if she should ever allow Delphin to touch her with his finger. It was, to sum up, complete anarchy; the army in revolt against the civil power, religion making itself complaisant toward the pleasures of the bourgeoisie; a whole people, a hundred and eighty inhabitants, devour-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ing each other in a hole, in face of the vast sea, and of the infinite sky.

Alone, in the midst of topsy-turvy Coqueville, Delphin preserved the laughter of a love-sick boy, who scorned the rest, provided Margot was for him. He followed her zigzags as one follows hares. Very wise, despite his simple look, he wanted the curé to marry them, so that his bliss might last forever.

One evening, in a byway where he was watching for her, Margot at last raised her hand. But she stopped, all red; for without waiting for the slap, he had seized the hand that threatened him and kissed it furiously. As she trembled, he said to her in a low voice: "I love you. Won't you have me?"

"Never!" she cried, in rebellion.

He shrugged his shoulders, then with an air, calm and tender, "Pray do not say that—we shall be very comfortable together, we two. You will see how nice it is."

II

That Sunday the weather was appalling, one of those sudden calamities of September that unchain such fearful tempests on the rocky coast of Grandport. At nightfall Coqueville sighted a ship in distress driven by the wind. But the shadows deepened, they could not dream of rendering help. Since the evening before, the

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

"Zéphir" and the "Baleine" had been moored in the little natural harbor situated at the left of the beach, between two walls of granite. Neither La Queue nor Rouget had dared to go out, the worst of it was that M. Mouchel, representing the Widow Dufeu, had taken the trouble to come in person that Saturday to promise them a reward if they would make a serious effort; fish was scarce, they were complaining at the markets. So, Sunday evening, going to bed under squalls of rain, Coqueville growled in a bad humor. It was the everlasting story: orders kept coming in while the sea guarded its fish. And all the village talked of the ship which they had seen passing in the hurricane, and which must assuredly by that time be sleeping at the bottom of the water. The next day, Monday, the sky was dark as ever. The sea, still high, raged without being able to calm itself, although the wind was blowing less strong. It fell completely, but the waves kept up their furious motion. In spite of everything, the two boats went out in the afternoon. Toward four o'clock, the "Zéphir" came in again, having caught nothing. While the sailors, Tupain and Brisemotte, anchored in the little harbor, La Queue, exasperated, on the shore, shook his fist at the ocean. And M. Mouchel was waiting! Margot was there, with the half of Coqueville, watching the last surgings of the tempest, sharing her father's rancor against the sea and the sky.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"But where is the 'Baleine'?" demanded some one.

"Out there beyond the point," said La Queue. "If that carcass comes back whole to-day, it will be by a chance."

He was full of contempt. Then he informed them that it was good for the Mahés to risk their skins in that way; when one is not worth a sou, one may perish. As for him, he preferred to break his word to M. Mouchel.

In the meantime, Margot was examining the point of rocks behind which the "Baleine" was hidden.

"Father," she asked at last, "have they caught something?"

"They?" he cried. "Nothing at all."

He calmed himself and added more gently, seeing the Emperor, who was sneering at him:

"I do not know whether they have caught anything, but as they never do catch anything—"

"Perhaps, to-day, all the same, they have taken something," said the Emperor ill-naturedly. "Such things have been seen." La Queue was about to reply angrily. But the Abbé Radiguet, who came up, calmed him. From the porch of the church the abbé had happened to observe the "Baleine"; and the bark seemed to be giving chase to some big fish. This news greatly interested Coqueville. In the groups reunited on the shore there were Mahés and Floches, the former praying that the boat might come in with a

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

miraculous catch, the others making vows that it might come in empty.

Margot, holding herself very straight, did not take her eyes from the sea. "There they are!" said she simply.

And in fact a black dot showed itself beyond the point. All looked at it. One would have said a cork dancing on the water. The Emperor did not see even the black dot. One must be of Coqueville to recognize at that distance the "Baleine" and those who manned her.

"See!" said Margot, who had the best eyes of the coast, "it is Fouasse and Rouget who are rowing— The little one is standing up in the bow."

She called Delphin "the little one" so as not to mention his name. And from then on they followed the course of the bark, trying to account for her strange movements. As the curé said, she appeared to be giving chase to some great fish that might be fleeing before her. That seemed extraordinary. The Emperor pretended that their net was without doubt being carried away. But La Queue cried that they were do-nothings, and that they were just amusing themselves. Quite certain they were not fishing for seals! All the Floches made merry over that joke; while the Mahés, vexed, declared that Rouget was a fine fellow all the same, and that he was risking his skin while others at the least puff of wind preferred *terra firma*. The Abbé Radiguet

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

was forced to interpose again for there were slaps in the air.

"What ails them?" said Margot abruptly. "They are off again!" They ceased menacing one another, and every eye searched the horizon. The "Baleine" was once more hidden behind the point. This time La Queue himself became uneasy. He could not account for such manoeuvres. The fear that Rouget was really in a fair way to catch some fish threw him off his mental balance. No one left the beach, although there was nothing strange to be seen. They stayed there nearly two hours, they watched incessantly for the bark, which appeared from time to time, then disappeared. It finished by not showing itself at all any more. La Queue, enraged, breathing in his heart the abominable wish, declared that she must have sunk; and, as just at that moment Rouget's wife appeared with Brise-motte, he looked at them both, sneering, while he patted Tupain on the shoulder to console him already for the death of his brother, Fouasse. But he stopped laughing when he caught sight of his daughter Margot, silent and looming, her eyes on the distance; it was quite possibly for Delphin.

"What are you up to over there?" he scolded. "Be off home with you! Mind, Margot!"

She did not stir. Then all at once: "Ah! there they are!"

He gave a cry of surprise. Margot, with her

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

good eyes, swore that she no longer saw a soul in the bark; neither Rouget, nor Fouasse, nor any one! The "Baleine," as if abandoned, ran before the wind, tacking about every minute, rocking herself with a lazy air.

A west wind had fortunately risen and was driving her toward the land, but with strange caprices which tossed her to right and to left. Then all Coqueville ran down to the shore. One half shouted to the other half, there remained not a girl in the houses to look after the soup. It was a catastrophe; something inexplicable, the strangeness of which completely turned their heads. Marie, the wife of Rouget, after a moment's reflection, thought it her duty to burst into tears. Tupain succeeded in merely carrying an air of affliction. All the Mahés were in great distress, while the Floches tried to appear conventional. Margot collapsed as if she had her legs broken.

"What are you up to again!" cried La Queue, who stumbled upon her.

"I am tired," she answered simply.

And she turned her face toward the sea, her cheeks between her hands, shading her eyes with the ends of her fingers, gazing fixedly at the bark rocking itself idly on the waves with the air of a good fellow who has drunk too much.

In the meanwhile suppositions were rife. Perhaps the three men had fallen into the water? Only, all three at a time, that seemed absurd.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

La Queue would have liked well to persuade them that the "Baleine" had gone to pieces like a rotten egg; but the boat still held the sea; they shrugged their shoulders. Then, as if the three men had actually perished, he remembered that he was Mayor and spoke of formalities.

"Leave off!" cried the Emperor, "Does one die in such a silly way?" "If they had fallen overboard, little Delphin would have been here by this!"

All Coqueville had to agree, Delphin swam like a herring. But where then could the three men be? They shouted: "I tell you, yes!"—"I tell you, no!"—"Too stupid!"—"Stupid yourself!" And matters came to the point of exchanging blows. The Abbé Radiguet was obliged to make an appeal for reconciliation, while the Emperor hustled the crowd about to establish order. Meanwhile, the bark, without haste, continued to dance before the world. It waltzed, seeming to mock at the people; the sea carried her in, making her salute the land in long rhythmic reverences. Surely it was a bark in a crazy fit. Margot, her cheeks between her hands, kept always gazing. A yawl had just put out of the harbor to go to meet the "Baleine." It was Brisemotte, who had exhibited that impatience, as if he had been delayed in giving certainty to Rouget's wife. From that moment all Coqueville interested itself in the yawl. The voices rose higher: "Well, does he see anything?"

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

The "Baleine" advanced with her mysterious and mocking air. At last they saw him draw himself up and look into the bark that he had succeeded in taking in tow. All held their breath. But, abruptly, he burst out laughing. That was a surprise; what had he to be amused at? "What is it? What have you got there?" they shouted to him furiously.

He, without replying, laughed still louder. He made gestures as if to say that they would see. Then having fastened the "Baleine" to the yawl, he towed her back. And an unlooked-for spectacle stunned Coqueville. In the bottom of the bark, the three men—Rouget, Delphin, Fouasse—were beatifically stretched out on their backs, snoring, with fists clenched, dead drunk. In their midst was found a little cask stove in, some full cask they had come across at sea and which they had appreciated. Without doubt, it was very good, for they had drunk it all save a liter's worth which had leaked into the bark and which was mixed with the sea water.

"Ah! the pig!" cried the wife of Rouget, brutally, ceasing to whimper.

"Well, it's characteristic—their catch!" said La Queue, who affected great disgust.

"Forsooth!" replied the Emperor, "they catch what they can! They have at least caught a cask, while others have not caught anything at all."

The Mayor shut up, greatly vexed. Coque-

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

ville brayed. They understood now. When barks are intoxicated, they dance as men do; and that one, in truth, had her belly full of liquor. Ah, the slut! What a minx! She festooned over the ocean with the air of a sot who could no longer recognize his home. And Coqueville laughed, and fumed, the Mahés found it funny, while the Flochès found it disgusting. They surrounded the "Baleine," they craned their necks, they strained their eyes to see sleeping there the three jolly dogs who were exposing the secret springs of their jubilation, oblivious of the crowd hanging over them. The abuse and the laughter troubled them but little. Rouget did not hear his wife accuse him of drinking up all they had; Fouasse did not feel the stealthy kicks with which his brother Tupain rammed his sides. As for Delphin, he was pretty, after he had drunk, with his blond hair, his rosy face drowned in bliss. Margot had gotten up, and silently, for the present, she contemplated the little fellow with a hard expression.

"Must put them to bed!" cried a voice.

But just then Delphin opened his eyes. He rolled looks of rapture over the people. They questioned him on all sides with an eagerness that dazed him somewhat, the more easily since he was still as drunk as a thrush.

"Well! What?" he stuttered; "it was a little cask— There is no fish. Therefore, we have caught a little cask."

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

He did not get beyond that. To every sentence he added simply: "It was very good!"

"But what was it in the cask?" they asked him hotly.

"Ah! I don't know—it was very good."

By this time Coqueville was burning to know. Every one lowered their noses to the boat, sniffing vigorously. With one opinion, it smelt of liquor; only no one could guess what liquor. The Emperor, who flattered himself that he had drunk of everything that a man can drink, said that he would see. He solemnly took in the palm of his hand a little of the liquor that was swimming in the bottom of the bark. The crowd became all at once silent. They waited. But the Emperor, after sucking up a mouthful, shook his head as if still badly informed. He sucked twice, more and more embarrassed, with an air of uneasiness and surprise. And he was bound to confess:

"I do not know— It's strange— If there was no salt water in it, I would know, no doubt— My word of honor, it is very strange!"

They looked at him. They stood struck with awe before that which the Emperor himself did not venture to pronounce. Coqueville contemplated with respect the little empty cask.

"It was very good!" once more said Delphin, who seemed to be making game of the people. Then, indicating the sea with a comprehensive sweep, he added: "If you want some, there is

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

more there—I saw them—little casks—little casks—little casks—”

And he rocked himself with the refrain which he kept singing, gazing tenderly at Margot. He had just caught sight of her. Furious, she made a motion as if to slap him; but he did not even close his eyes; he awaited the slap with an air of tenderness.

The Abbé Radiguet, puzzled by that unknown tippie, he, too, dipped his finger in the bark and sucked it. Like the Emperor, he shook his head: no, he was not familiar with that, it was very extraordinary. They agreed on but one point: the cask must have been wreckage from the ship in distress, signaled Sunday evening. The English ships often carried to Grandport such cargoes of liquor and fine wines.

Little by little the day faded and the people were withdrawn into shadow. But La Queue remained absorbed, tormented by an idea which he no longer expressed. He stopped, he listened a last time to Delphin, whom they were carrying along, and who was repeating in his sing-song voice: “Little casks—little casks—little casks—if you want some, there are more!”

III

That night the weather changed completely. When Coqueville awoke the following day an unclouded sun was shining; the sea spread out

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

without a wrinkle, like a great piece of green satin. And it was warm, one of those pale glows of autumn.

First of the village, La Queue had risen, still clouded from the dreams of the night. He kept looking for a long time toward the sea, to the right, to the left. At last, with a sour look, he said that he must in any event satisfy M. Mouchel. And he went away at once with Tupain and Brisemotte, threatening Margot to touch up her sides if she did not walk straight. As the "Zéphir" left the harbor, and as he saw the "Baleine" swinging heavily at her anchor, he cheered up a little saying: "To-day, I guess, not a bit of it! Blow out the candle, Jeanetton! those gentlemen have gone to bed!"

And as soon as the "Zéphir" had reached the open sea, La Queue cast his nets. After that he went to visit his "jambins." The jambins are a kind of elongated eel-pot in which they catch more, especially lobsters and red gurnet. But in spite of the calm sea, he did well to visit his jambins one by one. All were empty; at the bottom of the last one, as if in mockery, he found a little mackerel, which he threw back angrily into the sea. It was fate; there were weeks like that when the fish flouted Coqueville, and always at a time when M. Mouchel had expressed a particular desire for them. When La Queue drew in his nets, an hour later, he found nothing but a bunch of seaweed. Straightway he swore, his fists

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

clenched, raging so much the more for the vast serenity of the ocean, lazy and sleeping like a sheet of burnished silver under the blue sky. The "Zéphir," without a waver, glided along in gentle ease. La Queue decided to go in again, after having cast his nets once more. In the afternoon he came to see them, and he menaced God and the saints, cursing in abominable words.

In the meanwhile, Rouget, Fouasse, and Delphin kept on sleeping. They did not succeed in standing up until the dinner hour. They recollected nothing, they were conscious only of having been treated to something extraordinary, something which they did not understand. In the afternoon, as they were all three down at the harbor, the Emperor tried to question them concerning the liquor, now that they had recovered their senses. It was like, perhaps, eau-de-vie with liquorice-juice in it; or rather one might say rum, sugared and burned. They said "Yes"; they said "No." From their replies, the Emperor suspected that it was ratafia; but he would not have sworn to it. That day Rouget and his men had too many pains in their sides to go a-fishing. Moreover, they knew that La Queue had gone out without success that morning, and they talked of waiting until the next day before visiting their jambins. All three of them, seated on blocks of stone, watched the tide come in, their backs rounded, their mouths clammy, half-asleep.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

But suddenly Delphin woke up; he jumped on to the stone, his eyes on the distance, crying: "Look, Boss, off there!"

"What?" asked Rouget, who stretched his limbs.

"A cask."

Rouget and Fouasse were at once on their feet, their eyes gleaming, sweeping the horizon.

"Where is it, lad? Where is the cask?" repeated the boss, greatly moved.

"Off there—to the left—that black spot."

The others saw nothing. Then Rouget swore an oath. "Nom de Dieu!"

He had just spotted the cask, big as a lentil on the white water in a slanting ray of the setting sun. And he ran to the "Baleine," followed by Delphin and Fouasse, who darted forward tapping their backs with their heels and making the pebbles roll.

The "Baleine" was just putting out from the harbor when the news that they saw a cask out at sea was circulated in Coqueville. The children, the women, began to run. They shouted: "A cask! a cask!"

"Do you see it? The current is driving it toward Grandport."

"Ah, yes! on the left—a cask! Come, quick!"

And Coqueville came; tumbled down from its rock; the children arrived head over heels, while the women picked up their skirts with both hands

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

to descend quickly. Soon the entire village was on the beach as on the night before.

Margot showed herself for an instant, then she ran back at full speed to the house, where she wished to forestall her father, who was discussing an official process with the Emperor. At last La Queue appeared. He was livid; he said to the *garde champêtre*: "Hold your peace! It's Rouget who has sent you here to beguile me. Well, then, he shall not get it. You'll see!"

When he saw the "Baleine," three hundred metres out, making with all her oars toward the black dot, rocking in the distance, his fury redoubled. And he shoved Tupain and Brisemotte into the "Zéphir," and he pulled out in turn, repeating: "No, they shall not have it; I'll die sooner!"

Then Coqueville had a fine spectacle; a mad race between the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine." When the latter saw the first leave the harbor, she understood the danger, and shot off with all her speed. She may have been four hundred metres ahead; but the chances remained even, for the "Zéphir" was otherwise light and swift; so excitement was at its height on the beach. The Mahès and the Floches had instinctively formed into two groups, following eagerly the vicissitudes of the struggle, each upholding its own boat. At first the "Baleine" kept her advantage, but as soon as the "Zéphir" spread herself, they saw that she was gaining little by little. The

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

"Baleine" made a supreme effort and succeeded for a few minutes in holding her distance. Then the "Zéphir" once more gained upon the "Baleine," came up with her at extraordinary speed. From that moment on, it was evident that the two barks would meet in the neighborhood of the cask. Victory hung on a circumstance, on the slightest mishap.

"The 'Baleine'! The 'Baleine'!" cried the Mahés.

But they soon ceased shouting. When the "Baleine" was almost touching the cask, the "Zéphir," by a bold manœuvre, managed to pass in front of her and throw the cask to the left, where La Queue harpooned it with a thrust of the boat-hook.

"The 'Zéphir'! the 'Zéphir'!" screamed the Floches.

And the Emperor, having spoken of foul play, big words were exchanged. Margot clapped her hands. The Abbé Radiguet came down with his breviary, made a profound remark which abruptly calmed the people, and then threw them into consternation.

"They will, perhaps, drink it all, these, too," he murmured with a melancholy air.

At sea, between the "Baleine" and the "Zéphir," a violent quarrel broke out. Rouget called La Queue a thief, while the latter called Rouget a good-for-nothing. The men even took up their oars to beat each other down, and the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

adventure lacked little of turning into a naval combat. More than this, they engaged to meet on land, showing their fists and threatening to disembowel each other as soon as they found each other again.

"The rascal!" grumbled Rouget. "You know, that cask is bigger than the one of yesterday. It's yellow, this one—it ought to be great." Then in accents of despair: "Let's go and see the jambins; there may very possibly be lobsters in them."

And the "Baleine" went on heavily to the left, steering toward the point.

In the "Zéphir," La Queue had to get in a passion in order to hold Tupain and Brisemotte from the cask. The boat-hook, in smashing a hoop, had made a leaking for the red liquid, which the two men tasted from the ends of their fingers and which they found exquisite. One might easily drink a glass without its producing much effect. But La Queue would not have it. He caulked the cask and declared that the first who sucked it should have a talk with him. On land, they would see.

"Then," asked Tupain, sullenly, "are we going to draw out the jambins?"

"Yes, right away; there is no hurry!" replied La Queue.

He also gazed lovingly at the barrel. He felt his limbs melt with longing to go in at once and taste it. The fish bored him.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

"Bah!" said he at the end of a silence. "Let's go back, for it's late. We will return to-morrow." And he was relaxing his fishing when he noticed another cask at his right, this one very small, and which stood on end, turning on itself like a top. That was the last straw for the nets and the jambins. No one even spoke of them any longer. The "Zéphir" gave chase to the little barrel, which was caught very easily.

During this time a similar adventure overtook the "Baleine." After Rouget had already visited five jambins completely empty, Delphin, always on the watch, cried out that he saw something. But it did not have the appearance of a cask, it was too long.

"It's a beam," said Fouasse.

Rouget let fall his sixth jambin without drawing it out of the water. "Let's go and see, all the same," said he.

As they advanced, they thought they recognized at first a beam, a chest, the trunk of a tree. Then they gave a cry of joy.

It was a real cask, but a very queer cask, such as they had never seen before. One would have said a tube, bulging in the middle and closed at the two ends by a layer of plaster.

"Ah, that's comical!" cried Rouget, in rapture. "This one I want the Emperor to taste. Come, children, let's go in."

They all agreed not to touch it, and the "Baleine" returned to Coqueville at the same

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

moment as the "Zéphir," in its turn, anchored in the little harbor. Not one inquisitive had left the beach. Cries of joy greeted that unexpected catch of three casks. The *gamins* hurled their caps into the air, while the women had at once gone on the run to look for glasses. It was decided to taste the liquid on the spot. The wreckage belonged to the village. Not one protest arose. Only they formed into two groups, the Mahés surrounded Rouget, the Floches would not let go of La Queue.

"Emperor, the first glass for you!" cried Rouget. "Tell us what it is."

The liquor was of a beautiful golden yellow. The *garde champêtre* raised his glass, looked at it, smelt it, then decided to drink.

"That comes from Holland," said he, after a long silence.

He did not give any other information. All the Mahés drank with deference. It was rather thick, and they stood surprised, for it tasted of flowers. The women found it very good. As for the men, they would have preferred less sugar. Nevertheless, at the bottom it ended by being strong at the third or fourth glass. The more they drank, the better they liked it. The men became jolly, the women grew funny.

But the Emperor, in spite of his recent quarrels with the Mayor, had gone to hang about the group of Floches.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

The biggest cask gave out a dark-red liquor, while they drew from the smallest a liquid white as water from the rock; and it was this latter that was the stiffest, a regular pepper, something that skinned the tongue.

Not one of the Floches recognized it, neither the red nor the white.

There were, however, some wags there. It annoyed them to be regaling themselves without knowing over what.

"I say, Emperor, taste that for me!" said La Queue, thus taking the first step.

The Emperor, who had been waiting for the invitation, posed once more as connoisseur.

"As for the red," he said, "there is orange in that! And for the white," he declared, "that—that is excellent!"

They had to content themselves with these replies, for he shook his head with a knowing air, with the happy look of a man who has given satisfaction to the world.

The Abbé Radiguet, alone, did not seem convinced. As for him, he had the names on the tip of his tongue; and to thoroughly reassure himself, he drank small glasses, one after the other, repeating: "Wait, wait, I know what it is. In a moment I will tell you."

In the mean while, little by little, merriment grew in the group of the Mahés and the group of the Floches. The latter, particularly, laughed very loud because they had mixed the liquors, a

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

thing that excited them the more. For the rest, the one and the other of the groups kept apart. They did not offer each other of their casks, they simply cast sympathetic glances, seized with the unavowed desire to taste their neighbor's liquor, which might possibly be better. The inimical brothers, Tupain and Fouasse, were in close proximity all the evening without showing their fists. It was remarked, also, that Rouget and his wife drank from the same glass. As for Margot, she distributed the liquor among the Floches, and as she filled the glasses too full, and the liquor ran over her fingers, she kept sucking them continually, so well that, though obeying her father who forbade her to drink, she became as fuddled as a girl in vintage time. It was not unbecoming to her; on the contrary, she got rosy all over, her eyes were like candles.

The sun set, the evening was like the softness of springtime. Coqueville had finished the casks and did not dream of going home to dine. They found themselves too comfortable on the beach. When it was pitch night, Margot, sitting apart, felt some one blowing on her neck. It was Delphin, very gay, walking on all fours, prowling behind her like a wolf. She repressed a cry so as not to awaken her father, who would have sent Delphin a kick in the back.

"Go away, imbecile!" she murmured, half angry, half laughing; "you will get yourself caught!"

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

IV

The following day Coqueville, in rising, found the sun already high above the horizon. The air was softer still, a drowsy sea under a clear sky, one of those times of laziness when it is so good to do nothing. It was a Wednesday. Until breakfast time, Coqueville rested from the fête of the previous evening. Then they went down to the beach to see.

That Wednesday the fish, the Widow Dufeu, M. Mouchel, all were forgotten. La Queue and Rouget did not even speak of visiting their jam-bins. Toward three o'clock they sighted some casks. Four of them were dancing before the village. The "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" went in chase; but as there was enough for all, they disputed no longer. Each boat had its share. At six o'clock, after having swept all over the little gulf, Rouget and La Queue came in, each with three casks. And the fête began again. The women had brought down tables for convenience. They had brought benches as well; they set up two cafés in the open air, such as they had at Grandport. The Mahés were on the left; the Floches on the right, still separated by a bar of sand. Nevertheless, that evening the Emperor, who went from one group to the other, carried his glasses full, so as to give every one a taste of the six casks. At about nine o'clock they were much gayer than the night before.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

The next day Coqueville could never remember how it had gone to bed.

Thursday the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" caught but four casks, two each, but they were enormous. Friday the fishing was superb, undreamed of; there were seven casks, three for Rouget and four for La Queue. Coqueville was entering upon a golden age. They never did anything any more. The fishermen, working off the alcohol of the night before, slept till noon. Then they strolled down to the beach and interrogated the sea. Their sole anxiety was to know what liquor the sea was going to bring them. They waited there for hours, their eyes strained; they raised shouts of joy when wreckage appeared.

The women and the children, from the tops of the rocks, pointed with sweeping gestures even to the least bunch of seaweed rolled in by the waves. And, at all hours, the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" stood ready to leave. They put out, they beat the gulf, they fished for casks, as they had fished for tun; disdaining now the tame mackerel who capered about in the sun, and the lazy sole rocked on the foam of the water. Coqueville watched the fishing, dying of laughter on the sands. Then in the evening they drank the catch.

That which enraptured Coqueville was that the casks did not cease. When there were no more, there were still more! The ship that had been lost must truly have had a pretty cargo aboard;

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

and Coqueville became egoist and merry, joked over the wrecked ship, a regular wine-cellar, enough to intoxicate all the fish of the ocean. Added to that, never did they catch two casks alike; they were of all shapes, of all sizes, of all colors. Then, in every cask there was a different liquor. So the Emperor was plunged into profound reveries; he who had drunk everything, he could identify nothing any more. La Queue declared that never had he seen such a cargo. The Abbé Radiguet guessed it was an order from some savage king, wishing to set up his wine-cellar. Coqueville, rocked in mysterious intoxication, no longer tried to understand.

The ladies preferred the "creams"; they had cream of moka, of cacao, of mint, of vanilla. Marie Rouget drank one night so much anisette that she was sick.

Margot and the other young ladies tapped the curaçao, the benedictine, the trappistine, the chartreuse. As to the cassis, it was reserved for the little children. Naturally the men rejoiced more when they caught cognacs, rums, gins, everything that burned the mouth. Then surprises produced themselves. A cask of *raki* of Chio, flavored with mastic, stupefied Coqueville, which thought that it had fallen on a cask of essence of turpentine. All the same they drank it, for they must lose nothing; but they talked about it for a long time. Arrack from Batavia, Swedish eau-de-vie with cumin, tuica calugaresca

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

from Rumania, slivowitz from Servia, all equally overturned every idea that Coqueville had of what one should endure. At heart they had a weakness for kummel and kirschwasser, for liqueurs as pale as water and stiff enough to kill a man.

Heavens! was it possible so many good things had been invented! At Coqueville they had known nothing but eau-de-vie; and, moreover, not every one at that. So their imaginations finished in exultation; they arrived at a state of veritable worship, in face of that inexhaustible variety, for that which intoxicates. Oh! to get drunk every night on something new, on something one does not even know the name of! It seemed like a fairy-tale, a rain, a fountain, that would spout extraordinary liquids, all the distilled alcohols, perfumed with all the flowers and all the fruits of creation.

So then, Friday evening, there were seven casks on the beach! Coqueville did not leave the beach. They lived there, thanks to the mildness of the season. Never in September had they enjoyed so fine a week. The fête had lasted since Monday, and there was no reason why it should not last forever if Providence should continue to send them casks; for the Abbé Radiguet saw therein the hand of Providence. All business was suspended; what use drudging when pleasure came to them in their sleep? They were all bourgeois, bourgeois who were drinking expen-

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

sive liquors without having to pay anything at the café. With hands in pocket, Coqueville basked in the sunshine waiting for the evening's spree. Moreover, it did not sober up; it enjoyed side by side the gaieties of kummel, of kirschwasser, of ratafia; in seven days they knew the wraths of gin, the tendernesses of curaçao, the laughter of cognac. And Coqueville remained as innocent as a new-born child, knowing nothing about anything, drinking with conviction that which the good Lord sent them.

It was on Friday that the Mahés and the Floches fraternized. They were very jolly that evening. Already, the evening before, distances had drawn nearer, the most intoxicated had trodden down the bar of sand which separated the two groups. There remained but one step to take. On the side of the Floches the four casks were emptying, while the Mahés were equally finishing their three little barrels; just three liqueurs which made the French flag; one blue, one white, and one red. The blue filled the Floches with jealousy, because a blue liqueur seemed to them something really supernatural. La Queue, grown good-natured since he had been drunk, advanced, a glass in his hand, feeling that he ought to take the first step as magistrate.

"See here, Rouget," he stuttered, "will you drink with me?"

"Willingly," replied Rouget, who was staggering under a feeling of tenderness.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

And they fell upon each other's necks. Then they all wept, so great was their emotion. The Mahés and the Floches embraced, they who had been devouring one another for three centuries. The Abbé Radiguet, greatly touched, again spoke of the finger of God. They drank to each other in the three liqueurs, the blue, the white, and the red.

"Vive la France!" cried the Emperor.

The blue was worthless, the white of not much account, but the red was really a success. Then they tapped the casks of the Floches. Then they danced. As there was no band, some good-natured boys clapped their hands, whistling, which excited the girls. The fête became superb. The seven casks were placed in a row; each could choose that which he liked best. Those who had had enough stretched themselves out on the sands, where they slept for a while; and when they awoke they began again. Little by little the others spread the fun until they took up the whole beach. Right up to midnight they skipped in the open air. The sea had a soft sound, the stars shone in a deep sky, a sky of vast peace. It was the serenity of the infant ages enveloping the joy of a tribe of savages, intoxicated by their first cask of eau-de-vie.

Nevertheless, Coqueville went home to bed again. When there was nothing more left to drink, the Floches and the Mahés helped one another, carried one another, and ended by find-

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

ing their beds again one way or another. On Saturday the fête lasted until nearly two o'clock in the morning. They had caught six casks, two of them enormous. Fouasse and Tupain almost fought. Tupain, who was wicked when drunk, talked of finishing his brother. But that quarrel disgusted every one, the Floches as well as the Mahés. Was it reasonable to keep on quarreling when the whole village was embracing? They forced the two brothers to drink together. They were sulky. The Emperor promised to watch them. Neither did the Rouget household get on well. When Marie had taken anisette she was prodigal in her attentions to Brisemotte, which Rouget could not behold with a calm eye, especially since having become sensitive, he also wished to be loved. The Abbé Radiguet, full of forbearance, did well in preaching forgiveness; they feared an accident.

"Bah!" said La Queue; "all will arrange itself. If the fishing is good to-morrow, you will see—Your health!"

However, La Queue himself was not yet perfect. He still kept his eye on Delphin and leveled kicks at him whenever he saw him approach Margot. The Emperor was indignant, for there was no common sense in preventing two young people from laughing. But La Queue always swore to kill his daughter sooner than give her to "the little one." Moreover, Margot would not be willing.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"Isn't it so? You are too proud," he cried.
"Never would you marry a ragamuffin!"

"Never, papa!" answered Margot.

Saturday, Margot drank a great deal of sugary liqueur. No one had any idea of such sugar. As she was no longer on her guard, she soon found herself sitting close to the cask. She laughed, happy, in paradise; she saw stars, and it seemed to her that there was music within her, playing dance tunes. Then it was that Delphin slipped into the shadow of the casks. He took her hand; he asked: "Say, Margot, will you?"

She kept on smiling. Then she replied: "It is papa who will not."

"Oh! that's nothing," said the little one; "you know the old ones never will—provided you are willing, you." And he grew bold, he planted a kiss on her neck. She bridled; shivers ran along her shoulders. "Stop! You tickle me."

But she talked no more of giving him a slap. In the first place, she was not able to, for her hands were too weak. Then it seemed nice to her, those little kisses on the neck. It was like the liqueur that enervated her so deliciously. She ended by turning her head and extending her chin, just like a cat.

"There!" she stammered, "there under the ear—that tickles me. Oh! that is nice!"

They had both forgotten La Queue. Fortunately the Emperor was on guard. He pointed them out to the Abbé.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

"Look there, Curé—it would be better to marry them."

"Morals would gain thereby," declared the priest sententiously.

And he charged himself with the matter for the morrow. 'Twas he himself that would speak to La Queue. Meanwhile La Queue had drunk so much that the Emperor and the Curé were forced to carry him home. On the way they tried to reason with him on the subject of his daughter; but they could draw from him nothing but growls. Behind them, in the untroubled night, Delphin led Margot home.

The next day by four o'clock the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" had already caught seven casks. At six o'clock the "Zéphir" caught two more. That made nine.

Then Coqueville fêted Sunday. It was the seventh day that it had been drunk. And the fête was complete—a fête such as no one had ever seen, and which no one will ever see again. Speak of it in Lower Normandy, and they will tell you with laughter, "Ah! yes, the fête at Coqueville!"

V

In the mean while, since the Tuesday, M. Mouchel had been surprised at not seeing either Rouget or La Queue arrive at Grandport. What the devil could those fellows be doing? The sea was fine, the fishing ought to be splendid. Very

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

possibly they wished to bring a whole load of soles and lobsters in all at once. And he was patient until the Wednesday.

Wednesday, M. Mouchel was angry. You must know that the Widow Dufeu was not a commodious person. She was a woman who in a flash came to high words. Although he was a handsome fellow, blond and powerful, he trembled before her, especially since he had dreams of marrying her, always with little attentions, free to subdue her with a slap if he ever became her master. Well, that Wednesday morning the Widow Dufeu stormed, complaining that the bundles were no longer forwarded, that the sea failed; and she accused him of running after the girls of the coast instead of busying himself with the whiting and the mackerel which ought to be yielding in abundance. M. Mouchel, vexed, fell back on Coqueville's singular breach of honor. For a moment surprise calmed the Widow Dufeu. What was Coqueville dreaming about? Never had it so conducted itself before. But she declared immediately that she had nothing to do with Coqueville; that it was M. Mouchel's business to look into matters, that she should take a partner if he allowed himself to be played with again by the fishermen. In a word, much disquieted, he sent Rouget and La Queue to the devil. Perhaps, after all, they would come tomorrow.

The next day, Thursday, neither the one nor

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

the other appeared. Toward evening, M. Mouchel, desperate, climbed the rock to the left of Grandport, from which one could see in the distance Coqueville, with its yellow spot of beach. He gazed at it a long time. The village had a tranquil look in the sun, light smoke was rising from the chimneys; no doubt the women were preparing the soup. M. Mouchel was satisfied that Coqueville was still in its place, that a rock from the cliff had not crushed it, and he understood less and less. As he was about to descend again, he thought he could make out two black points on the gulf; the "Baleine" and the "Zéphir." After that he went back to calm the Widow Dufeu. Coqueville was fishing. The night passed. Friday was here. Still nothing of Coqueville. M. Mouchel climbed to his rock more than ten times. He was beginning to lose his head; the Widow Dufeu behaved abominably to him, without his finding anything to reply. Coqueville was always there, in the sun, warming itself like a lazy lizard. Only, M. Mouchel saw no more smoke. The village seemed dead. Had they all died in their holes? On the beach, there was quite a movement, but that might be seaweed rocked by the tide. Saturday, still no one. The Widow Dufeu scolded no more; her eyes were fixed, her lips white. M. Mouchel passed two hours on the rock. A curiosity grew in him, a purely personal need of accounting to himself for the strange immobility of the village. The

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

old walls sleeping beatifically in the sun ended by worrying him. His resolution was taken; he would set out that Monday very early in the morning and try to get down there near nine o'clock.

It was not a promenade to go to Coqueville. M. Mouchel preferred to follow the route by land, in that way he would come upon the village without their expecting him. A wagon carried him as far as Robineux, where he left it under a shed, for it would not have been prudent to risk it in the middle of the gorge. And he set off bravely, having to make nearly seven kilometers over the most abominable of roads. The route was otherwise of a wild beauty; it descended by continual turns between two enormous ledges of rock, so narrow in places that three men could not walk abreast. Farther on it skirted the precipices; the gorge opened abruptly; and one caught glimpses of the sea, of immense blue horizons. But M. Mouchel was not in a state of mind to admire the landscape. He swore as the pebbles rolled under his feet. It was the fault of Coqueville, he promised to shake up those do-nothings well. But, in the meantime, he was approaching. All at once, in the turning at the last rock, he saw the twenty houses of the village hanging to the flank of the cliff.

Nine o'clock struck. One would have believed it June, so blue and warm was the sky; a superb season, limpid air, gilded by the dust of the sun,

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

refreshed by the good smell of the sea. M. Mouchel entered the only street of the village, where he came very often; and as he passed before Rouget's house, he went in. The house was empty. Then he cast his eye toward Fouasse's—Tupain's—Brisemotte's. Not a soul; all the doors open, and no one in the rooms. What did it mean? A light chill began to creep over his flesh. Then he thought of the authorities. Certainly, the Emperor would reassure him. But the Emperor's house was empty like the others. Even to the *garde champêtre*, there was failure! That village, silent and deserted, terrified him now. He ran to the Mayor's. There another surprise awaited him: the house was found in an abominable mess; they had not made the beds in three days; dirty dishes littered the place; chairs seemed to indicate a fight. His mind upset, dreaming of cataclysms, M. Mouchel determined to go on to the end, and he entered the church. No more curé than mayor. All the authorities, even religion itself had vanished. Coqueville abandoned, slept without a breath, without a dog, without a cat. Not even a fowl; the hens had taken themselves off. Nothing, a void, silence, a leaden sleep under the great blue sky.

Parbleu! It was no wonder that Coqueville brought no more fish! Coqueville had moved away. Coqueville was dead. He must notify the police. The mysterious catastrophe exalted

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

M. Mouchel, when, with the idea of descending to the beach, he uttered a cry. In the midst of the sands, the whole population lay stretched. He thought of a general massacre. But the sonorous snores came to undeceive him. During the night of Sunday, Coqueville had feasted so late that it had found itself in absolute inability to go home to bed. So it had slept on the sand, just where it had fallen, around the nine casks, completely empty.

Yes, all Coqueville was snoring there; I hear the children, the women, the old people, and the men. Not one was on his feet. There were some on their stomachs, there were some on their backs; others held themselves *en chien de fusils*.³ As one makes his bed so must one lie on it. And the fellows found themselves, happen what may, scattered in their drunkenness like a handful of leaves driven by the wind. The men had rolled over, heads lower than heels. It was a scene full of good-fellowship; a dormitory in the open air; honest family folk taking their ease; for where there is care, there is no pleasure.

It was just at the new moon. Coqueville, thinking it had blown out its candle, had abandoned itself to the darkness. Then the day dawned; and now the sun was flaming, a sun which fell perpendicularly on the sleepers, powerless to make them open their eyelids. They slept rudely, all their faces beaming with the fine in-

³ Primed for the event.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

nocence of drunkards. The hens at early morning must have strayed down to peck at the casks, for they were drunk; they, too, sleeping on the sands. There were also five cats and five dogs, their paws in the air, drunk from licking the glasses glistening with sugar.

For a moment M. Mouchel walked about among the sleepers, taking care not to step on any of them. He understood, for at Grandport they, too, had received casks from the wreck of the English ship. All his wrath left him. What a touching and moral spectacle! Coqueville reconciled, the Mahés and the F'loches sleeping together! With the last glass the deadliest enemies had embraced. Tupain and Fouasse lay there snoring, hand in hand, like brothers, incapable of coming to dispute a legacy. As to the Rouget household, it offered a still more amiable picture, Marie slept between Rouget and Brisemotte, as much as to say that henceforth they were to live thus, happy, all the three.

But one group especially exhibited a scene of family tenderness. It was Delphin and Margot; one on the neck of the other, they slept cheek to cheek, their lips still opened for a kiss. At their feet the Emperor, sleeping crosswise, guarded them. Above them La Queue snored like a father satisfied at having settled his daughter, while the Abbé Radiguet, fallen there like the others, with arms outspread, seemed to bless them. In her sleep Margot still extended her

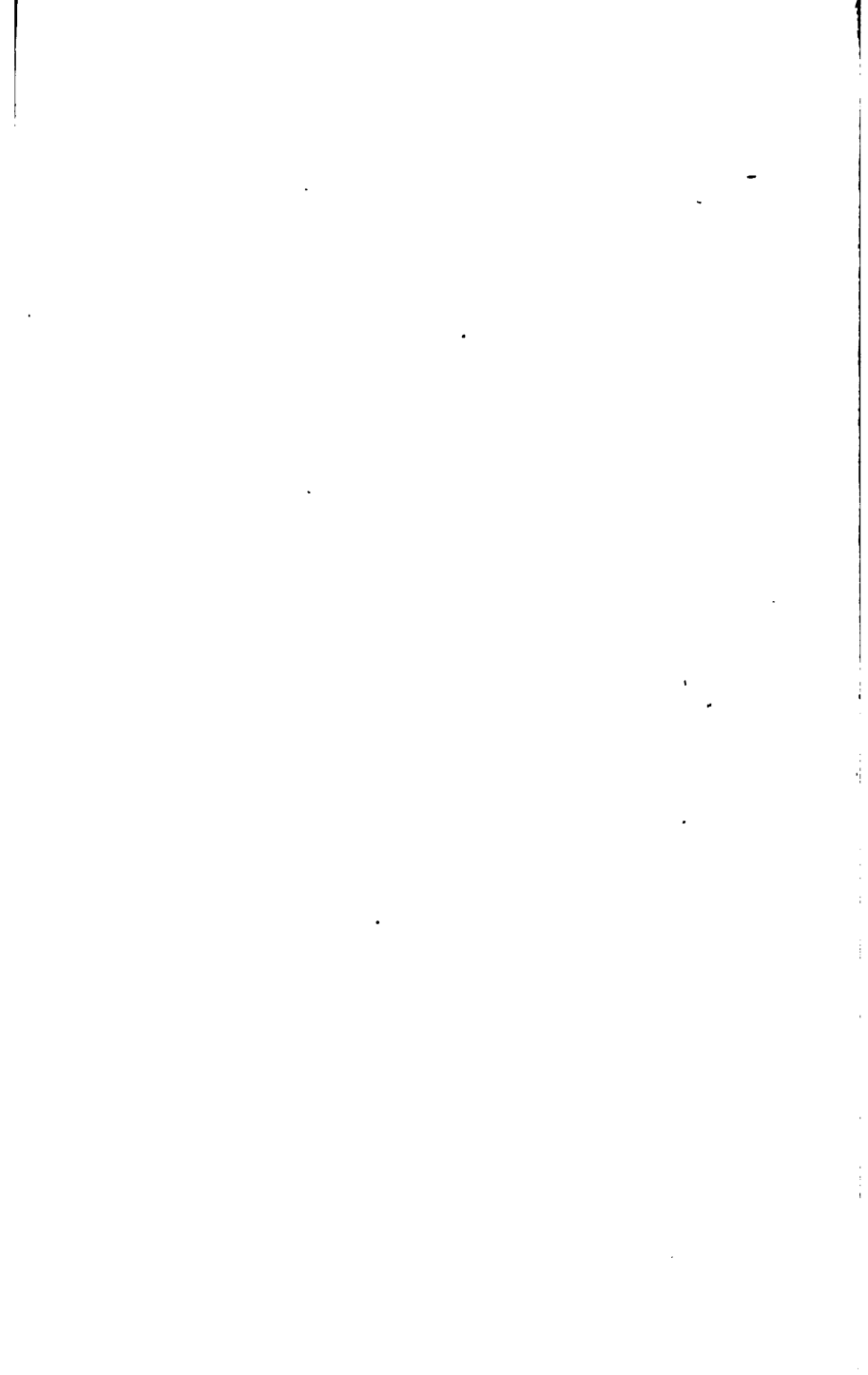
GREATEST SHORT STORIES

rosy muzzle like an amorous cat who loves to have one scratch her under the chin.

The fête ended with a marriage. And M. Mouchel himself later married the Widow Dufeu, whom he beat to a jelly. Speak of that in Lower Normandy, they will tell you with a laugh, "Ah! yes, the fête at Coqueville!"

GOOD BLOOD

BY ERNST VON WILDENBRUCH



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IS IT possible that there are people quite free from curiosity? People who can pass on behind any one they see gazing earnestly and intently toward some unknown object without feeling an impulse to stop, to follow the direction of the other's eyes, to discover what odd thing he may be looking at?

For my part, if I were asked whether I counted myself among that class of cold natures, I do not know that I could honestly answer "Yes." At any rate, there was once a moment in my life when I was not only goaded by such an impulse, but when I actually yielded to the temptation and fell into the way of any mere curiosity seeker.

The place in which it happened was in a wine-room in the old town where as Referendar¹ I was practising at court; the time was an afternoon in summer.

The wine-room, situated on the ground floor of a house in the great square which from the window one could look out upon in every direction,

¹ The title conferred in Prussia on the candidate who has passed the first of the two examinations held before appointment as judge.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

was at this hour nearly empty. To me this was all the more agreeable, for I have ever been a lover of solitude.

There were three of us: the fat waiter, who from a gray, dust-covered bottle was pouring out the golden-yellow Muscatel into my glass; then myself, who sat in a nook of the cozy, odd-cornered room and smacked the fragrant wine; and still another guest, who had taken his place at one of the two open windows, a tumbler of red wine lying before him on the window-sill, in his mouth a long brown, smoke-seasoned meerschaum cigar-holder, out of which he wrapped himself in a cloud of smoke.

This man, who had a long gray beard framing a ruddy face tinged bluish in places, was an old retired colonel, whom every one in town knew. He belonged to that colony of the Superannuated who had settled down in this pleasant place to wearily drag out the end of their days.

Toward noon they could be seen strolling deliberately in groups of twos or threes down the street, shortly to disappear into the wine-room, where between twelve and one they assembled at the round table to gossip. On the table stood pint bottles of sourish Moselle, over the table floated a thick mist of cigar smoke, and through the mist came voices, peevish, grating, discussing the latest event in the Army Register.

The old colonel, too, was a regular patron of

GOOD BLOOD

the wine-room, but he never came at the hour of general assembly, but later, in the afternoon.

He was a man of lonely disposition. Rarely was he seen in the company of others; his lodging was in the suburbs on the other side of the river, and from the window of his room one could look out over a wide stretch of meadow land which the river regularly inundated every spring, when it overflowed its banks. Many a time have I passed by his lodging and seen him standing at the window, his bloodshot eyes, rimmed with deep bags beneath, thoughtfully gazing out toward the gray waste of water beyond the embankment.

And now he sits there at the window of the wine-room and gazes out upon the square, over whose surface the wind sweeps along in a whirl of dust.

But what is he looking at, I wonder?

The fat waiter, bored to death over his two silent fees, had his attention already drawn toward the colonel's behavior; he stood in the middle of the room, his hands clasped behind the tail of his coat, and was gazing through the other window out on to the square.

Something must surely be going on there.

Quietly as possible, so as not to break the interest of the other two, I rose from my seat. But there was really nothing to be seen. The square was nearly empty; only in the center, under the great street lamps, I noticed two schoolboys who were facing each other in threatening attitude.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Could it be this, then, that so fixed the attention of the old colonel?

But having once begun, such is the nature of man, I could not withdraw my attention before knowing whether this threat of a fight would really swell to an outbreak. The boys had just come from afternoon school session; they were still carrying their portfolios under their arms. They may have been of equal age, but one was a head taller than the other. This bigger one, a tall, lank, overgrown schoolboy, with an unpleasant look in his freckled face, was blocking the way of the other, who was short and plump and had an honest face with chubby, red cheeks. The bigger boy seemed to be nagging at the other with taunting words, but by reason of the distance it was impossible to understand what he said. After this had been going on for a while, the quarrel suddenly broke out. Both boys dropped their portfolios to the ground; the little chubby boy lowered his head, as though to ram his opponent in the stomach, and then rushed at him.

"The big fellow there will soon have him in a fix," now said the colonel, who was earnestly following the movements of the enemy, and who seemed not to approve the tactics of the little chubby boy.

For whom he intended these words it would be hard to say; he spoke them to himself without addressing any one of us.

GOOD BLOOD

His prediction was at once justified.

The big fellow dodged the onset of his enemy; the next moment he had his left arm squeezed around the other's neck, so that the head of the latter was caught as in a noose; he had him, as they say, "in chancery." With his right hand he gripped the right fist of his opponent, who was trying to pummel him with it on the back, and when he had regularly trapped him and brought him completely under his power he dragged him again and again round and about the lamp-post.

"Clumsy lad," muttered the old colonel, continuing his monologue, "always to let himself get caught in that way." He was plainly disappointed in the little chubby boy, and could not endure the long, lanky one.

"They fight that way every day," he explained, noticing the waiter, to whom he seemed willing to account for his interest in the matter.

Then he turned his face again toward the window.

. "Wonder if the little one will turn up."

Scarcely had he mumbled this to the end when there came rushing from the city park that adjoined the square a slender little slip of a lad.

"There he is," said the old colonel. He swallowed a mouthful of red wine and stroked his beard.

The little fellow, who one felt sure by the resemblance must be a brother of little Chubby Cheeks, but a finer and improved edition, ran up,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

lifted high his portfolio with both hands and gave Long-Shanks a blow on the back that resounded away over to where we sat.

"Bravo!" said the old colonel.

Long-Shanks kicked like a horse at this new assailant. Little-Boy dodged, and the same instant Long-Shanks got a second blow, this time on the head, that sent his cap flying.

Nevertheless, he still kept his prisoner held in the trap and fast by the right hand.

Then Little-Boy tore open his portfolio with frantic haste; from the portfolio he drew out a pen-case, from the pen-case a pen-holder, which all at once he began jabbing into the hand of Long-Shanks that held his brother prisoner.

"Clever lad!" said the colonel to himself. "Fine lad!" His red eyes fairly gleamed with delight.

The affair was now becoming too hot for Long-Shanks. Stung with pain, he released his first opponent to throw himself with furious blows on Little-Boy.

But the latter was now transformed into a veritable little wild-cat. His hat had flown from his head, his curly hair clung round his fine, deathly pale face, out of which his eyes fairly burned; the portfolio with all its contents was lying on the ground—over cap, portfolio and all he went for the anatomy of Long-Shanks.

He threw himself on the enemy, and with little, clenched, convulsive fists belabored him so

GOOD BLOOD

on stomach and body that Long-Shanks began to retreat step by step.

In the mean while Chubby-Cheeks had recovered himself, snatched up his portfolio, and with blow after blow on the sides and back of his oppressor, pushed into the fight again.

Long-Shanks at last threw off Little-Boy, took two steps backward and picked up his cap from the ground. The fight was drawing to a finish.

Panting and out of breath, the three stood looking at one another. Long-Shanks showed an ugly grin, behind which he tried to hide the shame of his defeat; Little-Boy, with fists still doubled, followed every one of his movements with blazing eyes, ready at a moment to spring once more upon the enemy should the latter renew the attack. But Long-Shanks did not advance again; he had had enough. Sneering and shrugging his shoulders, he kept drawing away farther and farther until he had reached a safe distance, when he began to call out names.

The two brothers now collected the belongings of Little-Boy that lay scattered about, stuffed them into the portfolio, picked up their caps, whipped the dust from them, and turned homeward. On the way they passed the windows of our wine-room. I could now plainly see the brave little fellow; he was a thoroughbred, every inch of him. Long-Shanks was again approaching from behind and bawling after them through

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

the length of the square. Little-Boy shrugged his shoulders with fine contempt. "You great, cowardly bully," said he, and stopping suddenly, turned right about and faced the enemy. At once Long-Shanks stopped too, and the two brothers broke out into derisive laughter.

They were now standing directly under the window at which the old colonel was sitting. He leaned out.

"Bravo, youngster!" said he, "you are a plucky one—here—drink this on the strength of it." He had taken up the tumbler and was holding it out of the window toward Little-Boy. The boy looked up, surprised, then whispered something to his older brother, gave him his portfolio to hold, and gripped the big glass in his two little hands.

When he had drunk all he wanted, with one hand he held the glass by its stem, with the other took back the portfolio from his brother, and without asking by your leave, handed the glass over to him.

Chubby-Cheeks then took a long swallow.

"The blessed boy," muttered the colonel to himself. "I give him my glass, and without further ado he makes his *cher frère* drink out of it, too."

But by the face of Little-Boy, who now reached the glass up to the window again, one could see that he had only been doing something which seemed to him quite a matter of course.

GOOD BLOOD

"Do you like the bouquet?" asked the old colonel.

"Yes, thanks, very well," said the boy, who snatched at his cap politely, and went on his way with his brother.

The colonel looked after them until they had turned a corner of the street and disappeared from his sight.

"With boys like that"—then said the colonel, returning to his soliloquizing—"it is often an odd thing about boys like that."

"That they should fight so in the public streets!" said the fat waiter with disapproval, still standing at his post. "One wonders how the teacher can allow it; and they seem to belong to good family, too."

"It isn't that that does the harm," grunted the old colonel. "Young people must have their liberty, teachers can't always be keeping an eye on them. Boys all fight—must fight."

He rose heavily from his place so that the chair creaked beneath him, scraped the cigar butt out of its holder into the ash-tray, and walked stiffly over to the wall where his hat hung on a nail. At the same time he continued his reverie.

"In young blood like that nature will show itself—everything, just as it *really* is—afterward, when older, things look all much alike—then one is able to study more carefully—young blood like that."

The waiter had put his hat into his hand; the

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

colonel took up his tumbler again, in which there were still a few drops of the red wine.

"God bless the youngsters," he murmured; "they have hardly left me a drop." He looked, almost sadly, into what remained of the wine, then set the tumbler down again without drinking.

The fat waiter became suddenly alive.

"Will the colonel, perhaps, have another glass?"

The old man, standing at the table, had opened the wine list and was mumbling to himself.

"H'm—another sort, maybe—but one can't buy it by the glass—only by the bottle—somewhat too much."

Slowly his gaze wandered over in my direction; I read in his eyes the dumb inquiry a man sometimes throws his neighbor when he wants to go halves with him over a bottle of wine.

"If the colonel will allow me," I said, "it would give me great pleasure to drink a bottle with him."

He agreed, plainly not unwilling. He pushed the wine list over to the waiter, lining with his finger the sort he wanted, and said in a commanding tone: "A bottle of that."

"That is a brand I know well," he said, turning to me, while he threw his hat on a chair and sat down at one of the tables—"it's good blood."

I had placed myself at a table with him so that I could see his face in profile. His look was

GOOD BLOOD

again turned toward the window, and as he gazed past me up into the heavens, the glow of the sunset was reflected in his eyes.

It was the first time I had seen him at such close quarters.

By the look of his eyes he was lost in dreams, and as his hand played mechanically through his long beard, there seemed to rise before him out of the flood of the years that had rushed behind, forms that were once young when he was young, and which were now—who can say where? The bottle which the waiter had brought and placed at a table before us contained a rare wine. An old Bordeaux, brown and oily, poured into our glasses. I recalled the expression which the old man had used a short time before.

“I must admit, colonel, that this is indeed ‘good blood.’”

His flushed eyes came slowly back from the far away, turned upon me, and remained fixed there, as if he would say: “What do you know about it?”

He took a deep draft, wiped his beard, and gazed at his glass. “Strange,” he said, “when a man grows old—he recalls the earliest days far easier than those that come later.”

I was silent; I felt that I ought neither to speak nor question. When a man is lost in recollections he is making poetry, and one must not question a poet.

A long pause followed.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"What an assortment of people one has to meet with," he continued. "When one thinks of it—many who live on and on—it were often better they did not live at all—and others have to go so much too early." He passed the palm of his hand over the surface of the table. "Beneath that lies much."

It seemed as if the table had become to him as the surface of the earth, and that he was thinking of those lying beneath the ground.

"Had to keep thinking of this a little while ago"—his voice sounded hollow—"when I saw that little fellow. With a boy like that nature comes right out, fairly gushes out—thick as your arm. You can see blood in it. Pity, though, that good blood flows so freely—more freely than the other. I once knew a little chap like that."

And there it was.

The waiter had seated himself in a back corner of the room; I kept perfectly quiet; the heavy voice of the old colonel went laboring through the stillness of the room like a gust of wind that precedes a storm or some serious outbreak in nature.

His eyes turned toward me as if to search me, whether I could bear to listen. He did not ask, I did not speak, but I looked at him, and my look eagerly replied: "Go on."

But not yet did he begin; first he drew from the breast pocket of his coat a large cigar-case

GOOD BLOOD

of hard, brown leather, took out a cigar and slowly lighted it.

"You know Berlin, of course," said he, as he blew out the match and puffed the first cloud of smoke over the table. "No doubt you have traveled before this on the street railway—"

"Oh, yes; often."

"H'm—well, then, as you go along behind the New Friedrich Street from Alexander Square to the Jannowiz Bridge, there stands there on the right-hand side in new Friedrich Street, a great ugly old building; it is the old military school."

I nodded.

"The new one over there in Lichterfelde I do not know, but the old one, that I do know—yes—h'm—was even a cadet there in my time—yes—that one I do know."

This repetition of words gave me the feeling that he knew not only the house, but probably many an event that had taken place in it.

"As you come from Alexander Square," he continued, "there first comes a court with trees. Now grass grows in the court; in my time it was not so, for the drills took place there and the cadets went walking there during the hours of recreation. After that comes the great main building that encloses a square court, which is called the 'Karreehof,' and there, too, the cadets used to walk. Passing by from the outside, you can't see into the court."

I nodded again in confirmation.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"And then comes still a third court; it is smaller, and on it stands a house. Don't know what it is used for now; at that time it was the infirmary. You can still see there the roof of the gymnasium as you pass by; then next to the infirmary was the principal outdoor gymnasium. In it was a jumping ditch and a climbing apparatus and every other possible thing—now it has all gone. From the infirmary a door led out into the gymnasium, but it was always kept locked. When one wanted to go into the infirmary, one had to cross the court and enter in front. The door then, as I said, was always locked; that is, it was opened only on some special occasion, and that, indeed, was always a very mournful occasion. For behind the door was the mortuary, and when a cadet died he was laid therein, and the door remained open until the other cadets had filed by, and looked at him once more—and he was then taken out—yes—h'm."

A long pause followed.

"Concerning the new house over there in Lichterfelde," continued the old colonel in a somewhat disparaging tone, "I know nothing, as I said, but have heard that it is become a big affair with a great number of cadets. Here in New Friedrich Street there were not so many, only four companies, and they divided themselves into two classes: Sekundaner and Primaner, and to these two were added the Selektaner, or special students, who afterward

GOOD BLOOD

entered the army as officers, and who were nicknamed 'The Onions,'² because they had authority over the others and were barely tolerated in consequence.

"Now in the company to which I belonged—it was the fourth—there were two brothers who sat together in the same class with me, the Sekundaner. Their name is of no consequence—but—well, they were called, then, von *L*; the older of the two was called by the superiors *L* No. I, and the smaller, who was a year and a half younger than the other, *L* No. II. Among the cadets, however, they were called Big and Little *L*. Little *L*, indeed—h'm—"

He moved in his chair, his eyes gazed out into vacancy. It appeared that he had reached the subject of his reveries.

"Such a contrast between brothers I have never seen," he continued, blowing a thick cloud from his meerschaum pipe. "Big *L* was a strapping fellow, with clumsy arms and legs and a big fat head; Little *L* was like a willow switch, so slender and supple. He had a small, fine head, and light, wavy hair that curled of itself, and a delicate nose like a young eagle's, but above all—he was a lad—"

The old colonel drew a deep sigh. "Now you must not think that all this was a matter of indifference to the cadets; on the contrary. The brothers had scarcely entered the Berlin Cadet

²"Die Bollen," a term of dislike among the Berlin cadets.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

School from the preparatory school (they came from the one at Wahlstatt, I believe) when their status was at once fixed: Big L was neglected, and Little L was the universal favorite.

"Now with such boys it is an odd thing: the big and the strong, they are the leaders, and on whomsoever these bestow their favor, with that boy all goes well. It also procures for him respect from the others, and no one ventures lightly to attack him. Such boys—here again nature stands right out—much as it is with the animals, before the biggest and strongest all the rest must crouch."

Fresh, vigorous puffs from the meerschäum accompanied these words.

"When the cadets came down at recreation time those who were good friends together met and would go walking arm in arm around the 'Karreehof' and toward the court where the trees stood, and so it was always until the trumpet sounded for return to work.

"Big L—well—he attached himself just wherever he could find attachment, and stalked sullenly ahead by himself—Little L, on the contrary, almost before he could reach the court was seized under the arm by two or three big fellows and compelled to walk with them. And they were Primaners at that. For ordinarily, you must know, it never occurred to a Primaner to go with a 'Knapsack,' or Plebe, from the Sekunda; it was far beneath his dignity; but with Little L

GOOD BLOOD

it was different, there an exception was made. And yet he was no less loved by the Sekundaner than by the Primaner. One could see that in class, where we Sekundaner boys, you know, were by ourselves. In class we were ranged according to alphabet, so that the two L's sat together very nearly in the centre.

"In their lessons they stood pretty nearly even. Big L had a good head for mathematics; in other things he was not of much account, but in mathematics he was, as you might say, a "shark," and Little L, who was not strong in mathematics, used to "crib" from his brother. In all other respects Little L was ahead of his older brother, and in fact one of the best in his class. And right here appeared the difference between the brothers; Big L kept his knowledge to himself, and never prompted; Little L, *he* prompted, he fairly shouted—yes, to be sure he did—"

A tender smile passed over the face of the old man.

"If any one on the front form was called upon and did not know the answer—Little L hissed right across all the forms what he ought to say: when it came the turn of the back benches little L spoke the answer half-aloud to himself.

"There was there an old professor from whom we took Latin. During nearly every lesson he would stop short in the middle of the class; 'L No. II,' he would say, 'you are prompting again! And that, too, in a most shameless fashion.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

Have a care, L No. II, next time I will make an example of you. I say it to you now for the last time!"

The old colonel laughed to himself. "But it always remained the next to last time, and the example was never made. For though Little L was no model boy, more often quite the contrary, he was loved by both teachers and officers as well—but how indeed could it have been otherwise? He was always in high spirits, as if receiving a new present every day, yet nothing ever got sent to him, for the father of the two was in desperately poor circumstances, a major in some infantry regiment or other, and the boys received hardly a groschen (2.4 cents) for pocket money. And always as if just peeled out of the egg, so fresh—without and within—eh, eh, altogether—"

Here the colonel paused, as if searching for an expression that would contain the whole of his love for this former little comrade.

"As if Nature had been for once in a proudly good-humor," he said, "and had stood that little follow upright on his feet and cried: 'There you have him!'

"Now this was to be observed," he continued, "that just so much as the brothers differed, one from the other, the more they seemed to cling to each other. In Big L, indeed, one did not notice it so much; he was always sullen and displayed no feeling; but Little L could never conceal anything. And because Little L felt conscious of

GOOD BLOOD

this, how much better he himself was treated by the other cadets, it made him sorry for his brother. When we took our walks around the courtyard, then one could see how Little L would look at his brother from time to time, to see if he, too, had some one to walk with. That he prompted his brother in class and allowed him to copy from himself when sight-exercises were dictated was all a matter of course; but he also took care that no one teased his brother, and when he observed him quietly from the side, as he often did, without drawing his brother's attention to it, then his little face was quite noticeably sad, almost as if he were a great care to him—"

The old man pulled hard at his pipe. "All that I put together for myself afterward," said he, "when everything happened that was to happen; he knew at the time much better than we did how matters stood with Big L, and what was his brother's character.

"This was, of course, understood among the cadets, and it helped Big L none the more, for he remained disliked after it as before, yet it made Little L all the more popular, and he was generally called 'Brother Love.'

"Now the two lived together in one room, and Little L, as I said, was very clean and neat; the big one, on the contrary, was very slovenly. And so Little L fairly made himself servant to his brother, and it turned out that he even cleaned the brass buttons on his uniform for him, and

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

just before the ranks formed for roll-call would place himself, with clothes-brush in hand, in front of his brother, and once more regularly brush and scrub him—especially on those days when the ‘cross lieutenant’ was on duty and received roll-call.

“Well, in the morning the cadets had to go down into the court for roll-call, and there the officer on duty went up and down between the lines and inspected their uniforms to see if they were in order.

“And when the ‘cross lieutenant’ attended to this, then there reigned the most woful anxiety throughout the company, for he always found something. He would go behind the cadets and flip at their coats with his finger to make the dust fly, and if none came, then he would lift their coat-pockets and snap at them, and so, beat our coats as much as we would, there was sure to be left some dust lying on them, and as soon as the ‘cross lieutenant’ saw it, he would sing out in a voice like that of an old bleating ram: ‘Write him down for Sunday report,’ and then Sunday’s day off might go to the devil, and then that got to be a very serious matter.”

The old colonel paused, took a vigorous swallow of wine, and with the palm of his hand squeezed the beard from his upper lip into his mouth and sucked off the wine drops that sparkled on the hair. Recollection of the “cross lieutenant” made him plainly furious.

GOOD BLOOD

"When one considers what sort of meanness it takes to so deprive a poor little fellow of the Sunday holiday he has been hugging for a whole week, and all for a trifle—bah! it's downright—whenever I have seen any one annoying my men—in later days that sort of thing didn't happen in my regiment; they knew this, that I was there and would not tolerate it.—To be rough at times, ay, even to the extreme if necessary, to throw one into the guard-house, that does no harm—but to nag—for that it takes a mean skunk!"

"Very true!" observed the waiter from the back part of the room, and thus made it known that he was following the colonel's story.

The old man calmed himself and went on with his story.

"Things went on this way for a year, and then came the time for examinations, always a very special occasion.

"The Primaners took their ensign's examination, and the Selektaners, who, as I have said, were called 'Onions,' the officer's examination, and as fast as any had passed the examination, they were dismissed from the cadet corps and sent home, and it came about that the second classmen, or Sekundaner, who were to be promoted to first class, still remained Sekundaner for a time.

"Well, this state of affairs lasted until the new Sekundaner entered from the preparatory school and the newly dubbed 'Onions' returned, and

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

then once more the wheelbarrow trudged along its accustomed way. But in the meantime a kind of disorder prevailed, more especially just after the last of the Primaners had left—they were examined in sections, you know, and then despatched, after which everything went pretty much at sixes and sevens.

“There was now in the dormitory where the two brothers lived a certain Primaner, a ‘swell,’ as he was called by the cadets, and because he had made up his mind, as soon as he should pass the examination and breathe the fresh air again, to conduct himself like a fine gentleman, he had had made for himself, instead of a sword-belt like those the cadets procured from the institution and wore, a special patent-leather belt of his own, thinner and apparently finer than the ordinary regulation belt. He was able to afford this much, you see, for he had money sent to him from home.

He had displayed this belt about everywhere, for he was inordinately proud of it, and the other cadets admired it.

“Now as the day arrived for the Primaner to pack together his scattered belongings in order to go home, he looked to buckle on his fine belt—and all at once the thing was missing.

“A great to-do followed; search was made everywhere; the belt was not to be found. The Primaner had not locked it in his wardrobe, but had put it with his helmet in the dormitory be-

GOOD BLOOD

hind the curtain where the helmets of the other cadets lay openly,—and from there it had disappeared.

“It could not possibly have disappeared in any other way—some one must have taken it.

“But who?

“First they thought of the old servant who was accustomed to blacken the boots of the cadets, and keep the dormitory in order—but he was an old trusty non-commissioned officer, who had never during the course of his long life allowed himself to be guilty of the least irregularity.

“It surely could not be one of the cadets? But who could possibly think such a thing? So the matter remained a mystery, and truly an unpleasant one. The Primerer swore and scolded because he must now leave wearing the ordinary institution belt; the other cadets in the room were altogether silent and depressed; they had at once unlocked all their wardrobes and offered to let the Primerer search them, but he had merely replied: ‘That’s nonsense, of course; who could think of such a thing?’

“And now something remarkable happened, and caused more sensation than all that went before; all at once the Primerer got back the belt.

“He had just left his room with his portman-teau in his hand, and had reached the stairs, when he was hastily called from behind, and as he turned about, Little L came running up, holding

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

something in his hand—it was the Primaner's belt.

Two others happened to be passing at the time, and they afterward told how deathly pale Little L was, and how every member of his body was literally shaking. He had whispered something into the ear of the Primaner, and the two had exchanged all quietly a couple of words, and then the Primaner affectionately stroked the other's head, took off his regulation belt, buckled on the fine one and was gone; he had handed the regulation belt over to Little L to carry back. Naturally the story could now no longer be concealed, and it all came out accordingly.

"A new assignment of rooms was ordered; Big L was transferred; and just at the time all this was taking place, he had completed his removal to the new quarters.

"Afterward it occurred to the cadets that he had kept strangely quiet about the whole affair—but one always hears the grass growing after it has grown. So much, however, was certain; he had allowed no one to help him, and when Big L put his hands to the work, he became quite rough toward his little brother. But Little L, ready to help as he always was, did not allow himself to be deterred by this, and as he was taking out of his brother's locker the gymnasium drill jacket that was lying neatly folded together, he felt all at once something hard within—and it was the belt of the Primaner.

GOOD BLOOD

"What the brothers said to each other at the moment, or whether they spoke at all, no one has ever learned; for Little L had still so much presence of mind that he went noiselessly from the room.

"But hardly was he out of the door and in the corridor, when he threw the jacket on the ground, and without once thinking of what might be made out of the affair, he ran up behind the Primaner with the belt.

"But now, of course, it could no longer be helped; in five minutes the story was the property of the whole company.

"Big L had allowed himself to be driven by the devil and had become light-fingered. Half an hour later it was whispered softly from room to room: 'To-night, when the lamps are turned out, general consultation in the company hall!'

"In every company quarters, you must know, there was a larger room, where marks were given out, and certain public actions proceeded with, in what was called the company hall.

"So that evening, when the lamps were out, and everything was quite dark, there was a general movement from all the rooms, through the corridor; not a door ventured to slam, all were in stocking feet, for the captain and the officers still knew nothing and were allowed to know nothing of the meeting, else we would have brought a storm about our ears.

"As we came to the door of the company hall,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

there stood near the door against the wall one as white as the plaster on the wall—it was Little L. At the same moment a couple took him by the hands. ‘Little L can come in with us,’ they said; ‘he is not to blame.’ Only one of them all wished to oppose this; he was a long, big fellow—he was called—name of no consequence—well, then, he was called K. But he was overruled at once; Little L was taken in with us, a couple of tallow candles were lit and placed on the table, and now the consultation began.”

The colonel’s glass was empty again. I filled it for him, and he took a long swallow. “Over all this,” he went on, “one can laugh now if one wills; but this much I can say for us, we were not in a laughing mood, but altogether dismal. A cadet a rascal—to us that was something incomprehensible. All faces were pale, all speaking was but half aloud. Ordinarily it was considered the most despicable piece of meanness if one cadet reported another to the authorities—but when a cadet had done such a thing as to steal, then he was for us no longer a cadet, and it was for this reason that the consultation was being held, whether we ought to report to the captain what Big L had done.

“Long K was the first to speak. He declared that we ought to go at once to the captain and tell him everything, for at such meanness all consideration ceases. Now Long K was the biggest and strongest boy in the company; his words,

GOOD BLOOD

therefore, made a marked impression, and besides, we were all of his opinion at bottom.

"No one knew anything to object to this, and so there fell a general silence. All at once, however, the circle that had formed around the table opened and Little L, who had till now been flattening himself against the farthest corner of the room, came forward into the centre. His arms hung limp at the side of his body, and his face he kept lowered to the ground; one saw that he wished to say something, but could not find the courage.

"Long K was again laying down the law. 'L No. II,' said he, 'has no right to speak here.'

"But this time he was not so fortunate. He had always been hostile to the two, no one quite knew why, especially Little L. Moreover, he was not a bit popular, for as such youngsters have once and for all a tremendously fine instinct, they may have felt that in this long gawk lay hidden a perfectly mean, cowardly, wretched spirit. He was one of those who never venture to attack their equals in size, but bully the smaller and weaker ones.

"At that broke out a whispering on all sides: 'Little L *shall* speak! All the more reason for him to speak.'

"As the little fellow, who was still standing there, ever motionless and rigid, heard how his comrades were taking his part, suddenly the big tears rolled down his cheeks; he doubled his two

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

little fists and screwed them into his eyes and sobbed so heart-breakingly that his whole body shook from top to bottom and he could not utter a word.

"One of them went up to him and patted him on the back.

" 'Take it easy,' said he; 'what is it you wish to say?'

"Little L still kept on sobbing.

" 'If—he is shown up—' he then broke out at long intervals—'he will be dismissed from the corps—and then what will become of him?'

"There was silence everywhere; we knew that the young one was perfectly right, and that such would be the consequence if we reported him. Added to this we also knew that the father was poor, and involuntarily each thought of what his own father would say if he should learn the same of his son.

" 'But you must see yourself,' continued the cadet to Little L, 'that your brother has done a very contemptible thing and deserves punishment for it.'

"Little L nodded silently; his feelings were entirely with those who were censuring his brother. The cadet reflected a moment, then he turned to the others.

" 'I make a proposition,' said he; 'and if it be accepted we will not disgrace L No. I for life. We will prove on his body whether he has any honorable feelings left. L No. I himself shall

GOOD BLOOD

choose whether he wishes us to report him or whether we shall keep the matter to ourselves, cudgel him thoroughly for it, and then let the affair be buried.'

"That was an admirable way out. All agreed eagerly.

"The cadet laid his hand on Little L's shoulder. 'Go along, then,' said he, 'and call your brother here.'

"Little L dried his tears and nodded his head quickly—then he was out of the door and a moment after was back again, bringing his brother with him.

"Big L ventured to look at no one; like an ox that has been felled on the forehead, he stood before his comrades. Little L stood behind him, and never once did his eyes leave his brother's slightest movement.

"The cadet who had made the foregoing proposition began the trial of L No. I.

"Does he admit that he took the belt?"

"He admits it.'

"Does he feel that he has done something that has made him absolutely unworthy of being a cadet any longer?"

"He feels it.'

"Does he choose that we report him to the captain or that we thrash him soundly and that the matter shall then be buried?"

"He prefers to be soundly thrashed.'

"A sigh of relief went through the whole hall.

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

"It was determined to finish the matter at once then and there.

"One of the boys was sent out to fetch a rattan, such as we used for beating our clothes.

"While he was gone we tried to induce Little L to leave the hall, so that he should not be present at the execution.

"But he shook his head silently; he wished to remain on hand.

"As soon as the rattan came, Big L was made to lie face down on the table, two cadets seized his hands and drew him forward, two others took him by the feet so that his body lay stretched out lengthwise. The tallow candles were taken from the table and lifted up high, and the whole affair had an absolutely gruesome look.

"Long K, because he was the strongest, was to perform the execution; he took the rattan in his hand, stepped to one side, and with the force of his whole body let the cane come whistling down on to Big L, who was clothed only in drill jacket and trousers.

"The young fellow fairly rose under the fearful blow and would have cried out; but in a second Little L rushed up to him, took his head in both hands and smothered it against himself.

"'Don't scream,' he whispered to him; 'don't scream, else the whole affair will get out!'

"Big L swallowed down the cry and choked and groaned to himself.

GOOD BLOOD

"Long K again lifted up the cane, and a second swish resounded through the hall.

"The body of the culprit actually writhed on the table, so that the cadets were scarcely able to hold him down by his hands and feet. Little L had wrapped both arms around the head of his brother, and was crushing it with convulsive force against himself. His eyes were wide open, his face like the plaster on the wall, his whole body was quivering.

"Throughout the hall was a stillness like death, so that one could only hear the wheezing and puffing of the victim whom the little brother was smothering against his breast.

"All eyes were hanging on the little fellow; we all had a feeling that we could not look on at it any longer.

"When, therefore, the third blow had fallen and the whole performance repeated itself just as before, a general excited whisper followed: 'Now, it is enough—strike no more!'

"Long K, who had become quite red from the exertion, was raising his arm again for the fourth blow, but with one accord, three or four threw themselves between him and Big L, tore the rattan from his grasp, and thrust him back.

"The execution was at an end.

"The cadet aforesaid raised his voice once more, but only half aloud.

" 'Now, the affair is over with and buried,' said he, 'let each one give his hand to L No. I,

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

and let him that breathes even a word of the matter be accounted a rascal.'

"A general 'Yes, yes,' showed that he had spoken entirely in accord with the mind of the others. They stepped up to Big L and stretched out their hands to him, but then, as at a word of command, they threw themselves upon Little L. There formed a regular knot about the lad, first one and then another wished to grasp him by the hand and shake it. Those standing at the back stretched out their hands 'way across those in front, some even climbed on to the table to get at him; they stroked his head, patted him on the shoulder, and with it all was a general whispering: 'Little L, you glorious rascal, you superb Little L.' "

The old colonel lifted his glass to his mouth—it was as if he were forcing something down behind it. When he set it down again, he drew a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart.

"Boys like that," said he, "they have instinct—instinct and sentiment.

"The lights were turned out, all stole hushed through the corridor back to their rooms. Five minutes later every boy was lying in his bed, and the affair was ended.

"The captain and the other officers had heard not a sound of the whole matter.

"The affair was ended"—the voice of the speaker grew thick; he had buried both hands in

GOOD BLOOD

his trousers' pockets and was gazing before him through the fumes of the smoking cigar.

"So we thought that night, as we lay in bed.—Did Little L sleep that night? In the days following, when we assembled in class, it did not seem so. Before, it had been as if an imp were sitting in the place where the lad sat, and, like a rooster, had crowed it over the whole class—now it was as if there were a void in the place—so still and pale he sat in his place.

"As when a man flicks the dust from the wings of a butterfly—so was it with the little lad—I can not describe it otherwise.

"On afternoons one always saw him now walking with his brother. He may have felt that Big L would now find less companionship than ever among the others—so he provided company for him. And there the two went, then, arm in arm, always around about the Karreehof and across the court with the trees in it, one as well as the other with head bent to the ground, so that one scarcely saw that they ever spoke a word."

Again there came a pause in the narrative, again I had to fill the empty glass of the colonel, who smoked his cigar faster and faster.

"But all this," he continued, "would perhaps have worn itself out in course of time and everything have gone on as before—but for people!"

He laid his clenched fist on the table.

"There are people," said he, scowling, "who are like the poisonous weed in the field, at which

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

beasts nibble themselves to death. With such people the rest poison themselves!

"So, then, one day we were having lessons in physics. The teacher was showing us experiments on the electric machine, and an electric shock was to be passed through the whole class.

"To this end each one of us had to give his hand to his neighbor, so as to complete the circuit.

"As now Big L, who was sitting next to Long K, held out his hand to him, the lubber made a grimace as if he were about to touch a toad and drew back his hand.

"Big L quietly shrank into himself and sat there as if covered with shame. But at the same instant Little L is up and out of his place, over to his brother's side, at whose place, next to Long K, he seats himself, whose hand he grips and smashes with all the force of his body against the wooden form, so that the long gawk cries out with pain.

"Then he grabbed Little L by the neck and the two now began regularly to fight in the middle of class.

"The teacher, who had been tinkering all this time at his machine, now rushed up with coat-tails flying.

" 'Now! Now! Now!' he cried.

"He was, you must know, an old man for whom we had not exactly a great respect.

GOOD BLOOD

"The two were so interlocked that they did not break away, even though the professor was standing directly in front of them.

" 'What disgraceful conduct!' cried the professor. 'What disgraceful conduct! Will you separate at once!'

"Long K made a face as if he were about to cry.

" 'L No. II began it,' he said, 'though I did nothing at all to provoke him.'

"Little L stood straight up in his place—for we always had to stand when a professor spoke to us—big drops of perspiration coursed slowly down either cheek; he said not a word; he had bitten his teeth together so hard that one could see the muscles of his jaw through the thin cheeks. And as he heard what Long K said a smile passed over his face—I have never seen anything like it.

"The old professor expatiated at some length in beautiful set phrases over such disgraceful behavior, spoke of the 'utter depths of abysmal bestiality, which such conduct betrayed—we let him talk on; our thoughts were with Little L and Long K.

"And scarcely was the lesson at an end and the professor out of the door, when from the back a book came flying through the air the whole length of the class straight at the skull of Long K. And as he turned angrily toward the aggressor, from the other side he received another

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

book on his head, and now there broke out a general howling: 'Knock him down! Knock him down!' The whole class sprang up over tables and benches and there was a rush for Long K, whose hide was now so thoroughly tanned that it fairly smoked."

The old colonel, pleased, smiled grimly to himself and contemplated his hand as it still lay with fist doubled on the table.

"I helped," said he, "and with hearty good-will—I can tell you."

It was as if his hand had forgotten that it had grown fifty years older; as the fingers closed convulsively one could see that it was in spirit once again pummeling Long K.

"But as people must belong once and forever to their own kind," he continued his narrative, "so this Long K had to be naturally a revengeful, spiteful, malicious, *canaille*. He would much rather have gone to the captain and resentfully told him everything, but in our presence he did not dare; for that he was too cowardly.

"But that he had received a thrashing before the whole class, and that Little L was to blame for it, for that he did not forgive Little L.

"One afternoon, then, as recreation hour came round again, the cadets went walking in the courts; the two brothers, as usual, by themselves; Long K linked arm in arm with two others.

"To get from the Karreehof to the other court where the trees were, one had to pass under one

GOOD BLOOD

of the wings of the main building, and it was a rule that the cadets must not pass through arm in arm, so as not to obstruct the passageway.

"On this particular afternoon, as ill-luck would have it, Long K, as he was about to pass through with his two chums from the Karreehof to the other court, met the two brothers at the corridor, and they, deep in their thoughts, had forgotten to let go of one another.

"Long K, although the affair was no concern of his, when he saw this stood still, opened his eyes wide and his mouth still wider, and called out to the two: 'What does this mean,' said he, 'that you go through here arm in arm? Do you intend to block the way for honest people, you set of thieves?'"

Here the colonel interrupted himself.

"That is now fifty years ago," said he, "and more—but I remember it as if it had happened yesterday.

"I was just going with two others from the Karreehof, and suddenly we heard a scream come from the corridor—I can not describe at all how it sounded—when a tiger or other wild beast breaks loose from his cage and throws himself on some one, then, I think, one would hear something like it.

"It was so horrible that we three let our arms drop and stood there quite paralyzed. And not only we, but everything in the Karreehof stopped and suddenly grew quiet. And then everything

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

that had two legs to run with kept rushing up at full speed toward the corridor, so that it fairly swarmed and thickened black around the corridor. I, naturally, with the rest—and what I saw there—

“Little L had climbed on to Long K like a wildcat—nothing else—and with his left hand hanging on by the latter’s collar so that the tall gawk was half-choked, with his right fist he kept up a crack—crack—and crack right in the middle of Long K’s face, wherever it happened to strike, so that the blood was pouring from Long K’s nose like a waterfall.

“Now from the other court came the officer who was on duty and broke his way through the cadets. ‘L No. II, will you leave off at once!’ he thundered—for he was a man tall as a tree and had a voice that could be heard from one end of the Academy to the other, and we had a wholesome respect for him.

“But Little L neither heard nor saw, but kept on belaboring Long K in the face still more, and with it came again and again that fearful uncanny shriek that thrilled through us all, marrow and bone.

“When the officer saw that he took hold himself, gripped the little fellow by both shoulders, and by main force tore him away from Long K.

“As soon as he stood upon his feet, however, Little L rolled up the whites of his eyes, fell his

GOOD BLOOD

full length to the earth, and writhed on the ground in a convulsion.

"We had never yet seen anything like it, and were shocked and stared at it in absolute terror.

"But the officer, who had been bending down over him, now straightened himself: 'The lad certainly has a most serious convulsion,' said he. 'Forward, two take hold of his feet'—he himself lifted him under the arms—'over to the infirmary!'

"And so they bore Little L over to the infirmary.

"While they were carrying him there we went up to Big L to learn just what had happened, and from Big L and the other two who had been with Long K we then heard the whole story.

"Long K was standing there like a whipped dog and wiping the blood from his nose, and had it not been for this nothing would have saved him from receiving another murderous thrashing. But now all turned silently away from him, no one ever spoke another word to him; he made himself a social outcast."

The top of the table resounded as the old colonel struck it with his fist.

"How long the others kept him in Coventry," said he, "I know not. I sat in class with him for a whole year longer and spoke never a single word more to him. We entered the army at the same

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

time as ensigns; I did not give him my hand at parting; do not know whether he has become an officer; have never looked for his name in the army register; don't know whether he has fallen in one of the wars, whether he still lives or is dead—for me he was no more, is no more—the only thing I regret is that the person ever came into my life at all and that I can not root out the remembrance of him forever, like a weed one flings into the oven!

“The next morning came bad news from the infirmary: Little L was lying unconscious in a burning, nervous fever. In the afternoon his older brother was called in, but the little fellow no longer recognized him.

“And in the evening, as we all sat at supper in the big common dining-hall, a rumor came—like a great black bird with muffled beat of wings it passed through the hall—that Little L was dead.

“As we came back from the dining-hall into company quarters, our captain was standing at the door of the company hall; we were made to go in, and there the captain announced to us that our little comrade, L No. II, had fallen asleep that night, never to wake again.

“The captain was a very good man—he fell in 1866, a brave hero—he loved his cadets, and as he gave us the news, he had to wipe the tears from his beard. Then he ordered us all to fold our hands; one of us had to step forward and before all say ‘Our Father’ out loud—”

GOOD BLOOD

The colonel bowed his head.

"Then for the first time," said he, "I felt how really beautiful is the Lord's Prayer.

"And so, the next afternoon, the door that led from the infirmary to the outdoor gymnasium opened, the hateful, ominous door.

"We were made to step down into the court of the infirmary; we were to see once more our dead comrade.

"Our steps shuffled with a dull and heavy sound as we were marched over there; no one spoke a word; one heard only a heavy breathing.

"And there lay little L, poor little L!

"In his white little shirt he lay there, his hands folded on his breast, his golden locks curled about his forehead, which was white like wax; the cheeks so sunken that the beautiful, delicate little nose projected quite far—and in his face—the expression—"

The old colonel was silent, the breath came choking from his bosom.

"I have grown to be an old man," he went on falteringly—"I have seen men lying on the field of battle—men on whose faces stood written distress and despair—such heart sorrow as I saw in the face of this child I have never seen before or since—never—never—"

A deep stillness took possession of the wine-room where we were sitting. As the old colonel became silent and spoke no word more, the waiter

GREATEST SHORT STORIES

rose softly from his corner and lit the gas-jet that hung over our heads; it had grown quite dark.

I took up the wine bottle once more, but it was now almost empty—just one tear still crept slowly out—one last drop of the good blood.

INDEX BY AUTHORS

AUTHOR AND TITLE	VOL.	PAGE
ABOUT, EDMOND FRANÇOIS VALENTIN (Edmond' Fraw'nswa Valontan' Aboo'), <i>Which Was the Madman?</i>	VII	213
ADAMS, SAMUEL HOPKINS, <i>Such as Walk in Darkness</i>	III	359
ADE, GEORGE, " <i>To Make a Hoosier Holiday</i> "	III	109
ADELER, MAX, <i>Frictional Electricity</i>	II	109
ALTSEHLER, JOSEPH A., <i>After the Battle</i>	III	41
AMICIS, EDMONDO DE (Edmôn'dô de Amee'chis), <i>The Little Sardinian Drummer</i>	VI	345
ANDREIEV, LEONID (Lehôn'id Ondray'yef), <i>Valia</i> ...	VII	281
D'ANNUNZIO, GABRIELE (Gaabriel'le Dannoon'dzeeo), <i>The End of Candia</i>	V	349
BALZAC, HONORÉ DE (Honoray' de Bal'zac, as in "shall"), <i>The Unknown Masterpiece</i>	VII	25
BARRIE, JAMES MATTHEW, <i>The Courting of T'now-head's Bell</i>	VIII	105
BAUMBACH, RUDOLF (Roo'dolf Bah'umbogh), <i>The Fountain of Youth</i>	V	281
BIERCE, AMBROSE, <i>The Damned Thing</i>	II	305
BJÖRNSON, BJÖRNSTJERNE (Byern'styern Byern'-sun), <i>Railroad and Churchyard</i>	VI	79
BOLTWOOD, EDWARD, <i>The Wedding Bob Dean Ran</i> ..	IV	245
BOYSEN, HJALMAR HJORTH, <i>A Good-for-Nothing</i> ..	II	261
CASTELNUOVO, ENRICO (Enree'ko Kastelnoonaw'vo), <i>The Lost Letter</i>	V	51
CHATRIAN, ALEXANDRE (Alexan'dr Sha'treean), <i>The Dean's Watch</i>	VII	149
CHEKHOV, ANTON PAVLOVITCH (An'tôn Pavlo'vitch Chek'hof), <i>A Work of Art</i>	V	155
	VII	141
	III	227
COLTON, ARTHUR, <i>The Spiral Stone</i>		
COFFÉE, FRANÇOIS EDOUARD JOACHIM (Fraw'nswa Edwar' Yoahkeem' Copay'), <i>The Lost Child</i> ..	VII	303
CURWOOD, JAMES OLIVER, <i>Thomas Jefferson Brown</i> ..	II	367
	IV	259
	IV	71
DAVIS, REBECCA HARDING, <i>Balacchi Brothers</i>	I	331
DE FOREST, J. W., <i>The Brigade Commander</i>	II	23
DELAND, MARGARET, " <i>Many Waters</i> "	III	65
DOSTOIEVSKI, FEODOR MIKAILOVITCH (Fe'o-dor Mikaeel'ovitch Dôhstoyef'ski), <i>The Thief</i>	VI	235
DOUGLAS, HELEN COOPER, <i>Unseen Hands</i>	IV	273

INDEX BY AUTHORS

AUTHOR AND TITLE	VOL.	PAGE
DOYLE, A. CONAN, <i>A Scandal in Bohemia</i>	V	179
<i>My Friend the Murderer</i>	VII	71
DUMAS, ALEXANDRE DAVY DE LA PAILLETERIE (Alexan'dr Da'vee d'la Pay-tree' Dumah'), <i>A Bal Masqué</i>	VIII	253
DUMAS, ALEXANDRE, FILS (Alexan'dr Dumah' Feece), <i>The Hanging at La Piroche</i>	V	79
DUNNE, F. P., <i>Mr. Dooley on the Pursuit of Riches</i> . .	IV	151
BRCKMANN, ÉMILE (Aymeel' Airck'mon), <i>The Dean's Watch</i>	VII	149
ESCHSTREUTH, NATALY VON, <i>The Gray Nun</i>	VIII	137
FINNEGAN, MULLOY, <i>Out of the Storm</i>	III	373
FOGAZZARO, ANTONIO (Antò'nio Fògatzar'ro), <i>The Silver Crucifix</i>	V	309
FRANCE, ANATOLE (Anatole' Frahnce). See THI- RAULT, <i>Putois</i>	VIII	83
FREDERIC, HAROLD, <i>Brother Sebastian's Friendship</i> ..	II	239
FRIEDMAN, I. K., <i>The Return</i>	IV	339
GABORIAU, ÉMILE (Aymeel' Gaboreo'), <i>The Accursed House</i>	VI	5
GARSHIN, VSEVOLOD MIKAILOVITCH (Vsevo'lòdh Mikaeel'ovitch Garsheen'), <i>The Signal</i>	VIII	63
GAUTIER, THÉOPHILE (Teyofeel' Gó'tyay), <i>The Mummy's Foot</i>	V	327
GOGOL, NIKOLAI VASILIEVITCH (Nikola'i Vasilyey'- vitch Gó'gól), <i>The Cloak</i>	VI	17
GOREKI, MAXIM (Ma'xim Gor'ki). See PYESHKOV, <i>Boless</i>	V	297
GRANT, ROBERT, <i>Against His Judgment</i>	III	145
HALE, EDWARD EVERETT, <i>The Man Without a Country</i>	I	179
HARLAND, HENRY, <i>Rosemary for Remembrance</i>	III	333
HARRIS, JOEL CHANDLER, <i>Brother Rabbit's Cradle</i> ..	III	25
HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL, <i>The Great Stone Face</i> ...	I	91
HAYES, A. A., <i>The Denver Express</i>	II	69
HENRY, O., <i>The Phonograph and the Graft</i>	III	5
HEYSE, PAUL JOHANN LUDWIG (Paul Yo'hòn Lood'vigh High'zeh), <i>The Young Girl of Treppi</i> . .	VI	139
HOFFMAN, CHARLES FENNO, <i>The Man in the Reser- voir</i>	I	123
HUYSMANS, JORIS KARL (Yorees' Karl Weer'mon), <i>Sac-au-dos</i>	VIII	161
IRVING, WASHINGTON, <i>Rip Van Winkle</i>	I	5
JANIN, JULES GABRIEL (Zshool Gabriel' Zshan-an), <i>The Vendean Marriage</i>	VI	119
KELLY, MYRA, <i>A Christmas Present for a Lady</i>	III	131
KINGSLEY, FLORENCE MORSE, <i>At the End of His Rope</i>	III	261
KIPLING, RUDYARD, <i>The Man Who Would Be King</i> . .	VII	329
<i>The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney</i>	VIII	5

INDEX BY AUTHORS

AUTHOR AND TITLE	VOL.	PAGE
LAGERLÖF, SELMA (Sel'ma Log'erlerf), <i>The Outlaws</i>	V	21
LATHROP, GEORGE PARSONS, <i>In Each Other's Shoes</i>	IV	313
LEFEVRE, EDWIN, <i>The Tipster</i>	II	335
LEWIS, ALFRED HENRY, <i>How the Raven Died</i>	II	5
LONG, JOHN LUTHER, <i>Purple-Eyes</i>	III	165
LUDLOW, FITZ HUGH, <i>A Brace of Boys</i>	I	217
McCREAGH, GORDON, <i>Everett, Commissioner of Justice</i>	IV	159
MAUPASSANT, HENRI RÉNÉ ALBERT GUY DE (Awdree' Renay' Albair' Gee de Mō-pas-son'), <i>The Bit of String</i>	V	165
<i>The Necklace</i>	VIII	47
MÉRIMÉE, PROSPER (Prosper' Mehreemay'), <i>How the Redoubt Was Taken</i>	VII	131
MORRIS, CLARA, <i>The Wild Horse of Tartary</i>	II	321
MORROW, W. C., <i>The Inmate of the Dungeon</i>	II	215
MURRAY, W. H. H., <i>A Ride With a Mad Horse in a Freight-Car</i>	I	305
MUSSET, ALFRED LOUIS CHARLES DE (Alfred' Looee' Scharl de Mûsay'), <i>The Beauty Spot</i>	VI	277
NEEDHAM, HENRY BEACH, <i>The Polite Horse</i>	IV	197
NEWTON, W. DOUGLAS, <i>The Charge</i>	IV	229
NIESE, CHARLOTTE, <i>The Story of the Little Mamsell</i>	VIII	237
NORDAU, MAX SIMON (Mox See'mon Nor'dough), <i>Deliverance</i>	V	5
O'BRIEN, FITZ-JAMES, <i>The Diamond Lens</i>	I	137
PEATTIE, ELIA W., <i>A Michigan Man</i>	II	201
POE, EDGAR ALLAN, <i>The Murders in the Rue Morgue</i>	I	33
PORTER, SIDNEY. See HENRY, O.		
POUSHKIN, ALEXANDER SERGEIEVITCH (Alexan'der Sergey'evitch Poosh'kin), <i>The Queen of Spades</i>	VII	5
PYESHKOV, ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH (Aleks'ey Maksim'-ovitch Pyeshkof'). See GORKI, <i>Boless</i>	V	297
QUILLER-COUCH, A. T., <i>The Roll-Call of the Reef</i>	VIII	209
REUTER, GABRIELE (Garbriel'leh Roy'ter), <i>Bric-a-Brac and Destinies</i>	VI	375
RIEHL, WILHELM HEINRICH VON (Wil'helm Hine'righ Ree'ayl), <i>Castle Neideck</i>	V	101
RIVES, HALLIE ERMINE, <i>In the Wake of War</i>	IV	93
ROBERTS, CHARLES G. D., <i>Jean Michaud's Little Ship</i>	III	235
ROBERTS, THEODORE GOODRIDGE, <i>Captain Pike</i>	IV	129
SACHER-MASOCH, LEOPOLD VON (Lay'opolt fon Sar'-ker-Mass'ohgh), <i>Thou Shalt Not Kill</i>	VI	267
SAWYER, RUTH, <i>The Tall One and the Wee One</i>	IV	107
SCHNITZLER, ARTHUR (Ar'toor Schnitz'ler), <i>The Dead are Silent</i>	VII	103
SCOVILLE, SAMUEL, JR., <i>The Churching of Bankson</i>	IV	297

INDEX BY AUTHORS

AUTHOR AND TITLE	VOL.	PAGE
SCRIBE, AUGUSTIN EUGÈNE (Ogüstan' Irzah'ayn Screeb), <i>The Price of a Life</i>	V	367
SPEARMAN, FRANK H., <i>The Run of the Yellow Mail</i>	III	201
SPEARS, RAYMOND S., <i>The Silver Lake Panic</i>	IV	45
STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS, <i>The Suicide Club</i>	V	233
<i>The Sire de Maletroit's Door</i>	VI	199
STOCKTON, FRANK R., <i>My Terminal Moraine</i>	II	127
STODDARD, LORIMER, <i>The Indian's Hand</i>	II	185
STRINDBERG, JEAN AUGUST (Zhjan Ow'goost Strind'-baigr), <i>Love and Bread</i>	V	217
SUDERMANN, HERMANN (Hair'mon Soo'dermon), <i>A New-Year's Eve Confession</i>	VI	333
TARKINGTON, BOOTH, Mrs. <i>Protheroe</i>	IV	5
TAYLOR, BAYARD, <i>Who Was She?</i>	I	359
TELESHOV, NIKOLAI (Nikola'i Tele'shöf), <i>The Duel</i>	V	69
THIBAUT, ANATOLE FRANÇOIS (Anatole' Fra'h'nswa Tee'bô). See ANATOLE FRANCE, <i>Putois</i>	VIII	83
TOLSTOI, LEO NIKOLAIEVITCH (Lay'o Nikolai'evitch Tol'stwi), <i>The Long Exile</i>	VI	359
TRACY, VIRGINIA, <i>The Lotus Eaters</i>	III	287
TROWBRIDGE, J. T., <i>The Man Who Stole a Meeting-House</i>	I	269
TURGENEV, IVAN (Ee'vor Tourgey'nyef), <i>The Rendezvous</i>	VII	245
VERGA, GIOVANNI (Jyo-vra'ni Vair'ga), <i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>	VI	67
VIGNY, ALFRED VICTOR, COMTE DE (Alfred' Victor', Cawnt de Veenyee'), <i>Napoleon and Pope Pius VII</i>	VII	263
WELLS, H. G., <i>The Red Room</i>	VIII	269
WELLS, LEILA BURTON, <i>Bondage</i>	IV	357
WILDENBRUCH, ERNST VON (Airst fön Vil'-denbroogh), <i>Good Blood</i>	VIII	335
ZOLA, ÉMILE (Aymeel' Zô'la), <i>The Fête at Coqueville</i>	VIII	287
ZSCHOKKE, JOHANN HEINRICH DANIEL (Yo'hon Hine'righ Dan'yel Tchohk'ke), <i>The Broken Cup</i>	VII	181

INDEX BY TITLES

TITLE AND AUTHOR	VOL.	PAGE
ACCURSED HOUSE, THE, <i>Émile Gaboriau</i>	VI	5
AFTER THE BATTLE, <i>Joseph A. Altsheler</i>	III	41
AGAINST HIS JUDGMENT, <i>Robert Grant</i>	III	145
AT THE END OF HIS ROPE, <i>Florence Morse Kingsley</i>	III	261
BALACCHI BROTHERS, <i>Rebecca Harding Davis</i>	I	331
BAL MASQUÉ, A (A Bal Maskay'), <i>Alexandre Dumas</i>	VIII	253
BEAUTY SPOT, THE, <i>Alfred de Musset</i>	VI	277
BIT OF STRING, THE, <i>Guy de Maupassant</i>	V	165
BOLESS (Böless'), <i>Maxim Gorki</i>	V	297
BONDAGE, <i>Leila Burton Wells</i>	IV	357
BRACE OF BOYS, A, <i>Fitz Hugh Ludlow</i>	I	217
BRIC-A-BRAC AND DESTINIES, <i>Gabriele Reuter</i>	VI	375
BRIGADE COMMANDER, THE, <i>J. W. De Forest</i>	II	23
BROKEN CUP, THE, <i>Heinrich Zschokke</i>	VII	181
BROTHER RABBIT'S CRADLE, <i>Joel Chandler Harris</i> ..	III	25
BROTHER SEBASTIAN'S FRIENDSHIP, <i>Harold Frederic</i>	II	239
CAPTAIN PIKE, <i>Theodore Goodridge Roberts</i>	IV	129
CASTLE NEIDECK, <i>Wilhelm Heinrich von Riehl</i>	V	101
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (Cavalleer'ia Rusticah'na), <i>Giovanni Verga</i>	VI	67
CHARGE, THE, <i>W. Douglas Newton</i>	IV	229
CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR A LADY, A, <i>Myra Kelly</i> ..	III	131
CHURCHING OF BANKSON, THE, <i>Samuel Scoville, Jr.</i>	IV	297
CLOAK, THE, <i>Nikolai Gogol</i>	VI	17
COURTING OF T'NOWHEAD'S BELL, THE, <i>James Matthew Barrie</i>	VIII	105
DAMNED THING, THE, <i>Ambrose Bierce</i>	II	305
DEAD ARE SILENT, THE, <i>Arthur Schnitzler</i>	VII	103
DEAN'S WATCH, THE, <i>Erckmann-Chatrian</i>	VII	149
DELIVERANCE, <i>Max Nordau</i>	V	5
DENVER EXPRESS, THE, <i>A. A. Hayes</i>	II	69
DIAMOND LENS, THE, <i>Fitz-James O'Brien</i>	I	137
DUEL, THE, <i>Nikolai Teleshov</i>	V	69
END OF CANDIA, THE, <i>Gabriele d'Annunzio</i>	V	349
EVERETT, COMMISSIONER OF JUSTICE, <i>Gordon Mc- Creagh</i>	IV	159

INDEX BY TITLES

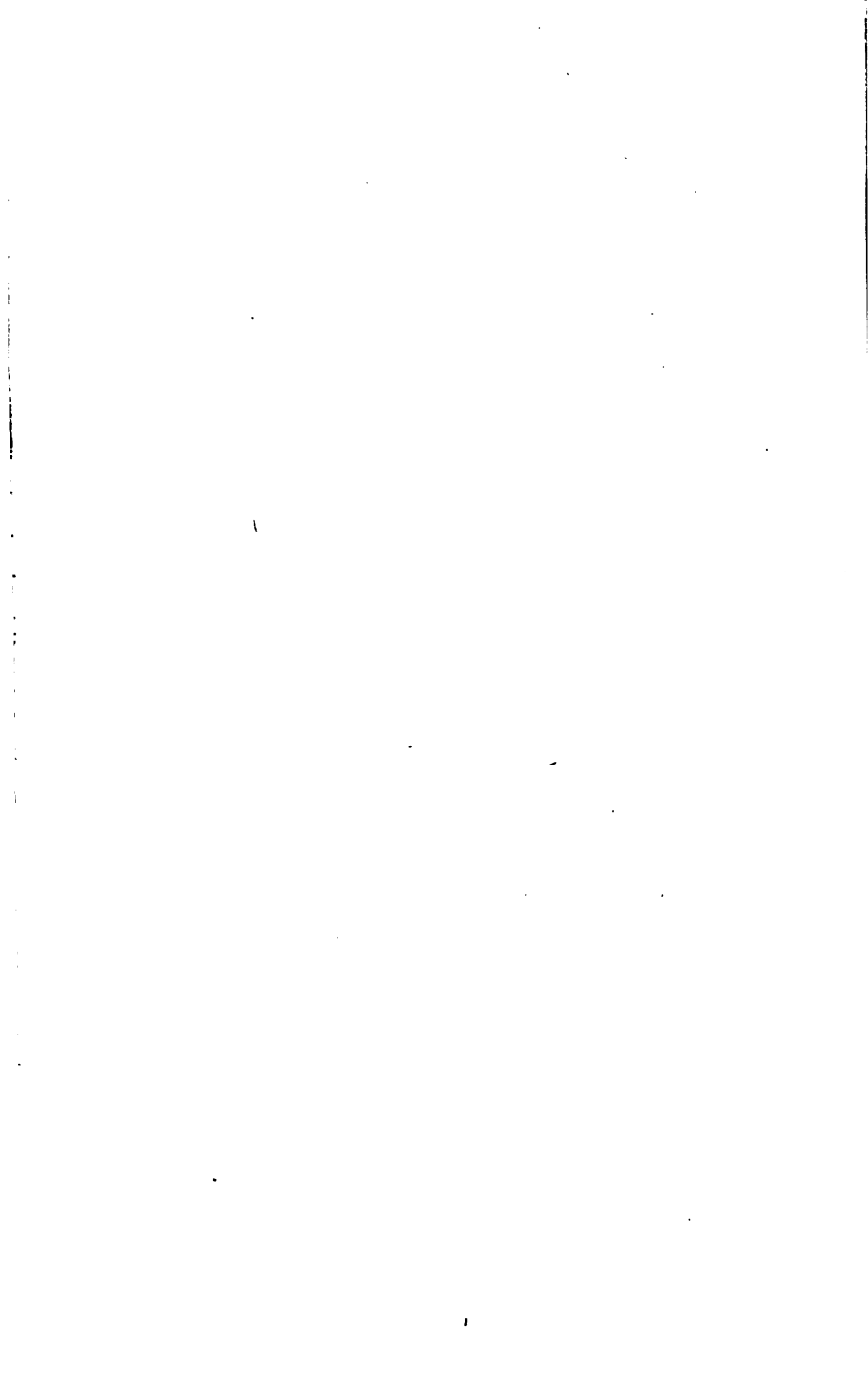
TITLE AND AUTHOR	VOL.	PAGE
FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE, THE (The Fate at Cøh'kvil), <i>Émile Zola</i>	VIII	287
FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH, THE, <i>Rudolf Baumback</i>	V	281
FRICTIONAL ELECTRICITY, <i>Max Adeler</i>	II	109
GOOD BLOOD, <i>Ernst von Wildenbruch</i>	VIII	335
GOOD-FOR-NOTHING, A, <i>Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen</i> ...	II	261
GRAY NUN, THE, <i>Nataly von Eschstruth</i>	VIII	137
GREAT STONE FACE, THE, <i>Nathaniel Hawthorne</i> ...	I	91
HANGING AT LA PIBOCHE, THE (The Hanging at La Peerawsh'), <i>Alexandre Dumas (Fils)</i>	V	79
HAPPIEST TIME, THE, <i>Mary Stewart Cutting</i>	IV	71
HIS FIRST PENITENT, <i>James Oliver Curwood</i>	IV	259
HOW THE RAVEN DIED, <i>Alfred Henry Lewis</i>	II	5
HOW THE REDOUBT WAS TAKEN, <i>Prosper Mérimée</i> ..	VII	131
INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY, THE, <i>Rud- yard Kipling</i>	VIII	5
IN EACH OTHER'S SHOES, <i>George Parsons Lathrop</i> ..	IV	313
IN THE WAKE OF WAR, <i>Hallie Erminie Rives</i>	IV	93
INDIAN'S HAND, THE, <i>Lorimer Stoddard</i>	II	185
INMATE OF THE DUNGEON, THE, <i>W. C. Morrow</i>	II	215
JEAN MICHAUD'S LITTLE SHIP, <i>Charles G. D. Roberts</i>	III	235
LITTLE SARDINIAN DRUMMER, THE, <i>Edmondo de Amicis</i>	VI	345
LONG EXILE, THE, <i>Leo Tolstoi</i>	VI	359
LOST CHILD, THE, <i>François Coppée</i>	VII	303
LOST LETTER, THE, <i>Enrico Castelnuovo</i>	V	51
LOTUS EATERS, THE, <i>Virginia Tracy</i>	III	287
LOVE AND BREAD, <i>August Strindberg</i>	V	217
MAN IN THE RESERVOIR, THE, <i>Charles Fenno Hoff- man</i>	I	123
MAN WHO STOLE A MEETING-HOUSE, THE, <i>J. T. Trowbridge</i>	I	269
MAN WHO WOULD BE KING, THE, <i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	VII	329
MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY, THE, <i>Edward Everett Hale</i>	I	179
"MANY WATERS," <i>Margaret Deland</i>	III	65
MICHIGAN MAN, A, <i>Elia W. Peattie</i>	II	201
MR. DOOLEY ON THE PURSUIT OF RICHES, <i>F. P. Dunne</i>	IV	151
MRS. PROTHEROE, <i>Booth Tarkington</i>	IV	5
MUMMY'S FOOT, THE, <i>Théophile Gautier</i>	V	327

INDEX BY TITLES

TITLE AND AUTHOR	VOL.	PAGE
MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE, THE, <i>Edgar Allan Poe</i>	I	33
MY FRIEND THE MURDERER, <i>A. Conan Doyle</i>	VII	71
MY TERMINAL MORaine, <i>Frank R. Stockton</i>	II	127
NAPOLEON AND POPE PIUS VII, <i>Alfred de Vigny</i> ...	VII	263
NECKLACE, THE, <i>Guy de Maupassant</i>	VIII	47
NEW-YEAR'S EVE CONFESSION, <i>A. Hermann Sudermann</i>	VI	333
OUTLAWS, THE, <i>Selma Lagerlöf</i>	V	21
OUT OF THE STORM, <i>Mulloy Finnegan</i>	III	373
PHONOGRAPH AND THE GRAFT, THE, <i>O. Henry</i>	III	5
POLITE HORSE, THE, <i>Henry Beach Needham</i>	IV	197
PRICE OF A LIFE, THE, <i>Eugène Scribe</i>	V	367
PURPLE-EYES, <i>John Luther Long</i>	III	165
PUTOIS (Pü'twa), <i>Anatole France</i>	VIII	83
QUEEN OF SPADES, THE, <i>Alexander Poushkin</i>	VII	5
RAILROAD AND CHURCHYARD, <i>Björnstjerne Björnson</i>	VI	79
RED ROOM, THE, <i>H. G. Wells</i>	VIII	269
RENDEZVOUS, THE (The Rön'dayvoo), <i>Ivan Turgenev</i> .	VII	245
RETURN, THE, <i>I. K. Friedman</i>	IV	339
RIDE WITH A MAD HORSE IN A FREIGHT-CAR, A, <i>W. H. H. Murray</i>	I	305
RIP VAN WINKLE, <i>Washington Irving</i>	I	5
ROLL-CALL OF THE REEF, THE, <i>A. T. Quiller-Couch</i> .	VIII	209
ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE, <i>Henry Harland</i>	III	333
RUN OF THE YELLOW MAIL, THE, <i>Frank H. Spearman</i>	III	201
SAC-AU-DOS (Sack-ô-dô), <i>Joris Karl Huysmans</i>	VIII	161
SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA, A, <i>A. Conan Doyle</i>	V	179
SIGNAL, THE, <i>Vsevolod Garshin</i>	VIII	63
SILVER CRUCIFIX, THE, <i>Antonio Fogazzaro</i>	V	309
SILVER LAKE PANIC, THE, <i>Raymond S. Spears</i>	IV	45
SIRE DE MALESTROIT'S DOOR, THE, <i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	VI	199
SLANDERER, THE, <i>Anton Chekhov</i>	VII	141
SPIRAL STONE, THE, <i>Arthur Colton</i>	III	227
STORY OF THE LITTLE MAMSELL, THE, <i>Charlotte Niese</i>	VIII	237
SUCH AS WALK IN DARKNESS, <i>Samuel Hopkins Adams</i>	III	359
SUICIDE CLUB, THE, <i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	V	233
TALL ONE AND THE WEE ONE, THE, <i>Ruth Sawyer</i> ..	IV	107
THIEF, THE, <i>Feodor Dostoievski</i>	VI	235

INDEX BY TITLES

TITLE AND AUTHOR	VOL.	PAGE
THOMAS JEFFERSON BROWN, <i>James Oliver Curwood</i> ..	II	367
THOU SHALT NOT KILL, <i>Leopold von Sacher-Masoch</i>	VI	267
TIPSTER, THE, <i>Edwin Lefevre</i>	II	335
"TO MAKE A HOOSIER HOLIDAY," <i>George Ade</i>	III	109
UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE, THE, <i>Honoré de Balzac</i> ...	VII	25
UNSEEN HANDS, <i>Helen Cooper Douglas</i>	IV	273
VALIA (Vah'lia), <i>Leonid Andreiev</i>	VII	281
VENDEAN MARRIAGE, THE (The Vendee'an Marriage), <i>Jules Janin</i>	VI	119
WEDDING BOB DEAN RAN, THE, <i>Edward Boltwood</i> ..	IV	245
WHICH WAS THE MADMAN? <i>Edmond About</i>	VII	213
WHO WAS SHE? <i>Bayard Taylor</i>	I	359
WILD HORSE OF TARTARY, THE, <i>Clara Morris</i>	II	321
WORK OF ART, A, <i>Anton Chekhov</i>	V	155
YOUNG GIRL OF TREFFL, THE, <i>Paul Heyse</i>	VI	139



7

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